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THROUGH THE STORM



H. 21.

"We cannot leave him here," said Clervaux. "The child will perish."—Page 22.

Through the Storm

Or

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BY

EMILY SARAH HOLT

AUTHOR OF "MISTRESS MARGERY," "SISTER ROSE," "IMOGEN,"
"THE WHITE ROSE OF LANGLEY," ETC. ETC.

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THROUGH THE STORM

CHAPTER I

OUR LADY OF WALSINGHAM

WELL, for sure, it is warm this morrow!" said a middle-aged woman, who might have been a little thinner with advantage, as she set down her basket on the grocer's counter. It was the morning of the 17th of July, three hundred and fifty-five years ago.

"Ay, you say well, Mistress Castle," replied the grocer. "And wherewith may I serve you this fine morrow?"

"Well, if you'd a puncheon of ice, I'd have thereof to start with; but I reckon you'll have none in stock."

Both the grocer and his customer laughed at the

preposterous idea that ice could be found anywhere in July.

"Heigh-ho!" said the customer, as she wiped her heated brow. "Go to! I ask a quintal of rice, an't please you, and a frail of pressed figs, and a pot of green ginger. I must have some pepper and canel belike, but I lack not enough of them to trouble you; I must go on to the spicer's, if I can trundle my old bones thither afore they melt."

The grocer, or grosser (the original term), dealt wholesale only, small quantities of his wares having to be procured from the spicer, pepperer, or treacle-monger.

"Nay, I can ease you there," answered the good-natured grocer; "to so ancient a customer as you be I stand not on strict order. How much canel would you?"

"Oh, an handful of sticks should serve my turn."

The grocer weighed out an ounce of cinnamon, and asked the quantity of pepper desired.

"Well, I reckon if I had about as much—and how doth good Mistress Annis this morrow?"

"She fares as well as may be looked for, thank God therefor!" answered the grocer, with a little sigh.

"Doth she now take matters betterway, or no?"

"We both bow ourselves under the hand of God," said the grocer seriously; "but it must needs be hard to lose the last child."

"Why, Master Clervis, they're ever so much better off no, are they? You wouldn't fetch 'em back out of heaven, sure?"

"I would not, verily," replied the bereaved father in a voice which was not quite clear and steady; "but the hearth is cold without them, and the heart grieveth whether the will go with it or no."

He did not enlarge on the subject, for he knew that she who spoke to him had never had a child to lose. He went on quietly folding up the pepper, while Mistress Castle felt in her pocket for the solid bag of money which she presently exhibited, and from which she counted the necessary cash.

"Think you to be at Lambeth to-morrow when the ladies come?" she asked, as she snapped the bag and dropped it into her ample pocket.

"Ay, I would fain be there," was the answer. "I wouldn't miss it for forty shillings; and Margaret Ettys, she saith the like. She and I go together. There's like to be a jolly crowd."

"Very like."

"Will the King's Grace be yonder, think you?"

"I should scarce look for it."

"What a time his Highness taketh in choosing of his fere!* I should have thought he might have found a score of maidens of degree ere now."

"Some say the new Queen shall come of outward parties,"† said the grocer, brushing up the cinnamon and pepper dust.

"Nay, I hope not. I love my own countrywomen the best. If I were a king, I'd never take up with a finicking, beggarly foreigner, when I could have the pick of English ladies. Nay, I wouldn't! Well, good morrow, Master Clervis. You'd best be in good time at Lambeth, and bring Mistress Annis withal. It shall hearten her up to see a good show, and have a bit of a brush with the crowd."

Mr. Clervaux was not of that opinion, but he knew that Mistress Castle's tongue would wag as long as it found room to do so, and he was not fond of female garrulity. He contented himself, therefore, with "Good morrow!" and she passed out.

The worthy grocer, as his name denoted, was of French Huguenot extraction, having come to England as a child of ten years old, twenty years before. Mistress Castle, who was rather prone to indulge in

* Companion, wife.

† From abroad.

mal à propos speeches, had quite forgotten this fact in the remarks she had just made. Two-thirds of Clervaux's life had been passed in England; he had married an Englishwoman, and was to all practical purposes an Englishman, a faint occasional tone or expression in his conversation being all that reminded his neighbour of his foreign original. Like most French Huguenots, he was grave and self-possessed to a degree unusual in his nation, yet without that almost stern austerity which marked the later votaries of his faith, after years of cruel persecution, and forced silence, and patient cross-bearing, had ground them into the dust.

Rodolphe Clervaux—his English name was Ralph Clervis—could enjoy a joke and laugh merrily when his heart was not bowed, as now, under the heavy hand of the Almighty. But at this time the grass was too new on the grave of his Magdalen, the last and dearest of his four children, all of whom God had taken. The funeral was over, and the shutters let down, three weeks before, and life had to go on, and could never be the same again. He had hoped and prayed most fervently that God would spare him this one last child. But it was not to be. Sorrowfully the poor father wondered what Providence meant him to do now. Was the rest of his life to be nothing better than petty shop-serving, nothing sweeter than dreary

amassing of money to no end? His aspirations had tended to simple domestic happiness, and his ambitions were not high. It seemed hard that this tempest should come down on his little garden and destroy his few choice flowers. Only one stage had he reached beyond this. He could say, "I opened not my mouth, because Thou didst it;" but he could not get further yet. "There is none upon earth that I desire beside Thee," was a song pitched too high at present for Ralph Clervaux's voice.

Agnes Clervaux, the wife and mother, stood between the two. Her grief had at first been more visible and passionate than that of her husband, but she recovered herself more quickly. "Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me," and "Thou knowest that I love Thee," were hymns that she could sing even in the fiery furnace. Ralph could usually sing them as well or better than she, only not just now.

The next day was as warm as the preceding one. The morning had barely touched afternoon when it became evident that something was expected to happen. Shops were closing early, and their owners making ready to go out, while a little stream of sight-seers gathered round the river-bank and passed over one after another to the southern shore. It could be seen that Lambeth Palace was the goal on which all

were bent. Ralph Clervaux shut up his shop early like his neighbours, and, with his wife in company went down to the Thames, hailed a boat, and was ferried across to Lambeth.

Round the Archbishop's Palace a crowd had already gathered—a light-hearted, laughing, jesting crowd—which evidently both expected and meant to be amused by whatever it might be that they awaited. Here and there, however, was one of very different stamp, some sullen, some indignant; but these were too few to affect the general temper of the gathering.

At last the cry was raised, "She comes! she comes!"

"Who comes? Is it the Lady Mary's Grace?" asked a man on the outskirts of the crowd, who was evidently a stranger.

A general laugh replied, a laugh in which there was more than a little of a sneer.

"You're in luck, my master!" said a young man jeeringly. "'Tis right that very lady that comes. Laud to our Lady Mary!"

The crowd fell back on both sides as the procession drew near. First walked the tipstaves and a handful of soldiers carrying black bills; then came several handsomely-attired gentlemen on horseback, followed by two of the chief men in the kingdom, the Lord

Chancellor Audley and Thomas Cromwell, Lord Privy Seal. Behind them six men carried on their shoulders some shapeless thing, covered with a piece of blue cloth.

"Here she comes, sweet Mary! my Lady the Princess!" cried the young man.

"Nay, lad, she's set aside, and her household 'minished," responded an older man; an allusion to recent political events, which raised another laugh through the crowd.

"Hold your foul tongues, ye irreverent knaves!" exclaimed one of those few who appeared to be indignant at the proceedings. "If our Lady were to lift her arm of power, where should ye be?"

"I reckon you'll have to help her, master, seeing 'tis made of wood," responded the young man. "She abides where ye shall set her, and moveth not out of her place."

"I'll back mine arm against hers any day," observed another.

"*Quomodo obscuratum est aurum,*" was the reply. "Can this be borne? Knave, wist thou not this is our Lady of Walsingham, first of all the Virgins, of England, before whose shrine kings have bowed and princes humbled themselves in the dust? She——"

"Nay, hold your hand, Sir Priest, if such you be; though your apparel is unchurchly. Surely, our Lady

of the Undercroft standeth higher than she of Walsingham."

"Hold your peace, both! Our Lady of Willesden hath wrought more miracles than either."

All the disputants were growing too warm for the interests of peace, when the Lord Privy Seal looked round and bade the bearers halt.

"Discover the image," said he, "and bear it upright into the Archbishop's hall."

The blue cloth was taken off, and the image set on its feet on the platform, which was then borne on the shoulders of the men.

The crowd continued their comments of various sorts.

"Leave her topple over, and let us see her save herself!"

"Pray you, have a care of our blessed Lady!"

"For mercy's sake, harm her not! She healed my little lad of a pleurisy," cried a woman's voice.

"Did she so? Then may she heal her own distresses, if she be hurt," replied the mocking tones of a man.

There was nothing remarkable about the image which was being borne into the hall of the palace. For nearly three centuries it had stood over the altar of the Lady Chapel at Walsingham, attired in rich robes, and adorned with the costliest jewels, so lavishly

heaped upon it that little of itself was left visible. Now, stripped of all its ornaments and glittering apparel, it was seen to be only a plain image of wood, somewhat roughly shaped, and a little battered in the lapse of time that it had stood there.

"Why, she's nought so much after all!" said a woman's voice in a disappointed tone.

"She was used to look vastly betterway in her old place," responded an elderly man.

"I marvel what the Lords mean to do with her," remarked another of the crowd, a middle-aged man better apparelled than the majority.

"They'd best set her up in some London church."

"Nay, I'd give her to heat some baker's oven."

"Set her in the King's hall in a niche; she may be wanted again anon, as like as not."

The jovial crowd laughed lightly at each suggestion.

"What say you, Master Clervis?" asked a neat, respectable-looking woman who stood near the grocer, and who had come with Mistress Castle.

"I say, Mistress Ettys, 'They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.'"

The bearers of the image, who needed to move very slowly, were now disappearing through the door of the hall.

“Farewell, my Lady of Walsingham!” cried the young man, with mock solemnity.

“What shall the Lords do with her?” repeated the gentleman who had before spoken, addressing himself to a man whose livery gown showed that he belonged to the Worshipful Company of Spurriers.

“Men thinketh she shall no doubt be burned,” was the answer; “but for where it is not yet appointed.”

“Burn our blessed Lady!” cried a priest in a horrified tone. “Have the caitiffs no fear of her wrath?”

“Whether were better, I pray you,” returned the man in the livery gown, “to burn the wooden image of our Lady, or the human image of our Lord? Is it two good months since you and I saw that done? I mind me of your face in the crowd at Master Forrest’s burning.”

“Be advised, Sir Priest, and sing something lower,” added his companion. “It shall be no easy time of day with such as you ere long. The wheel of fortune turneth round and round. Ye were uppermost once; but now——”

“Ay, and *then*!” said the priest significantly, in a low voice of concentrated hatred. “Some day, Master Smith, you’ll be undermost again. I wish you a good morrow till it come.”

“ And an ill one when it do ;” Mr. Smith finished his sentence for him with a grim smile. “ Very good, my master ; I will look out for you.”

The priest, however, was not there to hear, having worked himself out of the crowd and gone his way.





CHAPTER II

LOST TOM

WELL, the sight is o'er, I reckon; we may as well be on our way," resumed Mr. Smith. "Good morrow, Master Clervis! I counted to behold you here. Ah, good Mistress Ettys! a fair day to you likewise. Look out for the little lads! 'Tis ill bringing babes into a crowd."

Mr. Smith and the spurrier pushed through the now slowly dispersing crowd, and disappeared. But they left behind them something which did not disappear—a tiny child of six years old, with two small fists stuck into two small eyes, and sundry tears thence issuing.

Ralph Clervaux stooped down to the minute sight-seer.

"Whose lad art thou?" asked he.

"No—nobody's," sobbed the small child.

"Nay, come! that'll not do, methinks. Where's thy mother?"

"Haven't none."

"Well, thy father, then?"

"Haven't none neither."

"Who brought thee hither? Thy gram'mer, or sister, or whoso were it?"

"Haven't nobody. Nobody brought me."

"What's thy name?"

"Tom."

"Tom what?"

"Tom."

"Where dwellest thou?"

"Nowhere."

"Who looks after thee?"

"Me."

"Come, come! There's somebody else, I'm assured."

"Must be," said Mistress Ettys.

The curly head was shaken.

"Can anybody tell who this child is?" demanded Clervaux, in a loud voice.

A dozen people looked back; but not one knew anything about the boy.

"We cannot leave him here," said Clervaux. "The child will perish."

"Drop him in the Thames as you row across," suggested a careless young man, turning away.

"We'd best take him home," suggested Agnes Clervaux.

"And make inquiry touching him?" added Mistress Castle. "To be sure! I'll ask all about; I dare be bound somebody 'll own him afore long."

"Without they left him here o' purpose," said Mistress Ettys doubtfully.

"Little Tom," asked Agnes, bending over him, "wilt thou come with us and be seen to a while?"

"Dear heart!" laughed Mistress Castle. "Take him to you, neighbour, an' you have a mind; never ask him, marry! I wouldn't by my good will be burdened with a stranger child; my shoes to a pebble, but you'll repent it if you do."

"Nay, we've no thought of that," answered Clervaux. "My mistress here loveth little children, and we'll but take the lad home till we hear of his own elders."

Little Tom, after a long look into Agnes's face, had slipped a tiny hand into hers, and now trotted on by her side. The crowd was fast melting in all directions, but chiefly towards the river-side. The Clervaux, Mistress Ettys, and Mistress Castle crossed in the same boat, and on arriving at the landing-place, parted to go to their several homes. Little Tom trotted stolidly by Agnes, as if he deemed it of

very small consequence where he went or what might happen to him. As they turned into Gracechurch Street they met a woman with whom they were slightly acquainted.

"Good morrow, Mistress Clervis! You'll have been down to Lambeth, trow? How go matters yonder?"

"Ay, we have so, Mistress Bedike. Oh, there's been——"

"Why, saints bless us! there's little Tom Green. How came you by him?"

"Oh, know you this little lad?" said Agnes, in a relieved tone. "He seemed to be lost, for he said none had brought him thither, and that he looked after himself; so my master and I reckoned we were best to take him home, and make inquisition about him. Where 'longs he, pray you? Ralph can carry him thither, an' we know the place."

Anne Bedike shook her head. "It's like to be a long journey, neighbour. Truth to speak, the child 'longs no whither, and they that should look to him would be glad if he were verily lost, so that their shoulders were free of the burden. His father was a poor man, a decent, hard-working craftsman, that died last spring, and his mother hath had no light work to find herself and Tom in meat and raiment till some three se'nnights gone, when she departed

likewise. Since she died the lad hath been blown about by the wind, as you may say, dependent on everybody and belonging to nobody. I dare be bound it's truth he looks to himself, all the looking he's like to get. 'Tis pity: his elders were full decent folks, though they were poor, and should have trained him to be the like, had they lived. Like enough now he'll be fetched up a vagabond, and some day be a masterless man and a rogue, poor little soul! There's no creature like to care for him, without God doth."

Anne Bedike passed on her way, and the Clervaux went home. Agnes opened the back door, and Tom marched in. She was about to tell the child to wipe his shoes on the mat, when she noted to her satisfaction that Tom had forestalled her. The small, dilapidated shoes were being most diligently rubbed, and it took some time to suit Tom's ideas of propriety. When he had finished he looked up at Agnes.

"I'm clean now; may I come in?"

"Come in, my little lad," she answered kindly.

"Art thou hungered?"

"Ay," said Tom shortly.

"When didst eat thy dinner?"

"Hadn't none."

"No dinner at all?"

"Not to-day. Had some yesterday."

"I hope thou hadst, poor little man!" said the compassionate Agnes. "And what this morrow?"

"A crust that Ned Wilks wouldn't eat."

"How big?"

Tom measured off some four inches of his small arm. "It had tumbled in the mud," he explained, by way of accounting for the fastidiousness of Ned Wilks.

"Somebody wiped it for thee, I reckon?"

The curly head was shaken again. "There wasn't nought to wipe it on. Mother always said, 'Don't dirt thy raiment.' There wasn't nowhere else."

"Sit thee down and eat that," said Agnes, giving a solid slice of bread, spread with dripping, into the thin little hand.

She hung up her hood and cloak, and went in search of her husband.

"Ralph, what shall we do with the child?"

"I think, Annis, we were best ask the Lord."

"I am not so sure thereof. 'Tis scarce needful to ask a question whereto thou hast already heard the answer."

Ralph smiled. "Hast thou heard the answer, good wife? Prithee pass it on."

"'Take this child and nurse it for Me.' It seemed me, Ralph, I heard it in mine ear, ere Mistress Bedike were half through her story. May I care for him?"

"That must thou settle for thyself, Annis. He

should be thy trouble, not mine, for some years to come. If thou list to do it, and think that God hath bidden thee, I am not the man that shall say thee nay. There is room."

Ralph's voice trembled slightly as he spoke the last words.

"Ay, there is room and to spare," said Agnes softly. "The Lord hath emptied the nest, and it is yet here, warm and downy. I reckon He scarce meant us to keep it empty and useless, in especial when He seems to have sent us a little unfledged bird that lacks the mother's wing. And I think, Ralph, we shall be sure of the wages."

"Ay, ay," answered Ralph, in a low voice. "Be it as thou wilt, Annis."

"And that is," responded Annis, "as He will."

Little Tom had finished his slice of bread, and was sitting quite still on the settle where Agnes had placed him. When he saw her return, he said in a tone wherein there was a little wistful regret—

"Am I to go now?"

"Whither wouldst thou go, my lad?" said Agnes tenderly.

"Nowhere. Round."

"But to whom wouldst thou go?"

"Haven't nobody."

"Then what canst thou do?"

"Sit of a step. Run errands—if I can get 'em."

"Do folks pay thee when they send thee of errands?"

"Sometimes."

"And where dost thou sleep?"

Little Tom's eyes kindled with faint interest.

"Had a brave bed this se'nnight!"

"Hadst thou?—at whose house?"

"Mistress Wilks' dog sleeps in a barrel. There's lots of straw. I creeps in beside him. He's as warm as can be."

"Poor little soul! Art not afeared lest he bite thee?"

"Oh no! we're friends. He shakes his tail when I come nigh him."

"Hath Mistress Wilks been caring thee then?"

"She cares not much," said little Tom shrewdly. "Clover cares more. Ned doesn't care neither. He pelts me."

"Poor little friendless child!" cried Agnes. "Little Tom, if we were to care thee—take thee into our house, and breed thee up in good ways, and find thee in food and raiment—dost think thou wouldst be a good lad, and not make us sorry we had thus dealt with thee?"

Ralph had come in, and stood looking on with a half-smile on his lips. Little Tom was silent for a moment. Then he surprised them by his answer.

"Wouldn't God make me good, if I asked Him?"

"Surely, if thou shalt ask it with thine whole heart."

"Mother said so."

"Methinks thou hadst a good mother, Tomlin," said Agnes. "I will strive to be the like to thee, if God will make me good enough."

"I can ask Him," suggested Tom simply.

"So thou canst, dear heart," assented Agnes gravely, though the smile broadened on Ralph's lips. "I will make thee a little bed up in the attic."

"In the attic?" repeated little Tom, looking suddenly blank.

"Ay, wherefore no?"

"But mustn't I sleep any more with Clover? he'll miss me; he's the only friend I've got."

Something very like a sob finished the speech. Ralph and Agnes looked at each other.

"Thou wert thinking," began the latter.

"Ay, I was," said her husband. "Is Clover a big dog, Tom?"

"He's bigger than me," said Tom.

"Dost think Mistress Wilks would sell him?"

"Sell Clover?" Little Tom's voice was one of bitter distress.

"Ay, I want to buy a big dog to guard the shop."

"*Buy* Clover? Oh!" Little Tom's voice passed suddenly from pain to rapture.

"'Tis Mistress Wilks of the Cross Keys; no, is it? Ay, so I thought. I were best go and see her, and get to know. Tom, wilt be a good boy if I buy Clover?"

"I'll be a good boy anyhow," said Tom sturdily, "if God will make me one. But, if you buy Clover, I'll love you for ever and ever—if you'll buy me too!"

Ralph patted the child's head with moistened eyes.

"I think, little Tom," said he, "I have had thee given me. I'll go and see if I can buy Clover."





CHAPTER III

NEW DEPARTURES



ED, where's that child gone?"

"How should I know?"

"Take that, thou imperent loon! Is that the fashion wherein thou answerest thy mother?"

Ned grinned, and dodged the blow aimed at him. He was a rough-looking, large-built boy of twelve years old.

"The pest these childer be!" exclaimed Mistress Wilks, going to look out of the shop door. The shop was a draper's, and the long rolls of linen and woollen pendent at the door almost hid her from view. "Oh, well, let be!" said she, after a look up and down the street; "he'll come back when he's hungered; good luck if he should not! Call me if customers come in; I'm a-going——"

"Here's Master Clervis a-coming now," shouted Ned; and Mrs. Wilks turned back into the shop.

"With what may I serve you, my master?" she inquired, placing herself behind the counter, and resting both hands on the edge. "Linsey of the best—camlet, fustian, kersey; all as good as you'll find any whither in the city. Is it a coat you would have, or a gown for my mistress your wife? I have here as goodly a piece of violet frisado as ever——"

"I cry you mercy, neighbour; I am not come to chaffer," answered Ralph Clervaux, thereby suddenly extinguishing the interest which Mrs. Wilks was feeling in him. "And yet," he added, "we may perchance trade somewhat ere I depart."

Mrs. Wilks pricked up her ears again at this.

"You can tell me, I believe, of a little child named Tom Green?"

"Ned can, I think," answered Mrs. Wilks carelessly. "He's here and there about. I and the neighbours give him a bite and sup by times, but he belongs to nobody. Has some harm chanced him, or what?"

"No harm hath chanced him; but, if none own the child, I think to take him, and bring him up to my trade in course of time. I found that you had cared somewhat for him, and thought I had best bear your mind thereon ere I come to a point."

"My mind is, that I and my neighbours want nought

of the child. If you've a mind to take him, good luck attend you! That's all I have to say."

"Very good," said Ralph. "Then one other question have I to ask, by your leave—I wish to obtain a large dog, and I believe you have the manner of beast I would fain buy: have you any mind to sell him?"

"What, Clover? You must ask Ned that—he's his dog; his uncle gave him to him. I care nought about it," said Mistress Wilks, to whom selling a dog was the equivalent, not of losing a friend, but of disposing of a piece of worsted.

Ned gave a second grin, which was a favourite proceeding with that young gentleman.

"Well, lad, what say you?" asked Ralph good-humouredly.

"What'll you give me?" demanded Ned.

"Fix your own price, and I will see if I take it."

Ned would have preferred an offer. He was terribly afraid of asking too little.

"Well," said he, in a drawling voice, "he's a good dawg, look you, and not old neither. I haven't much mind to sell him, without you make it worth my while."

"Shall we go and look at him?" suggested Ralph.

Ned shambled off through the shop, in answer, to a backyard, where stood the barrel Tom thought so brave a bed, and half out of it, on the straw, lay a large dog of the species then termed a red spaniel, the red most likely indicating the colour now called tan. Ralph noticed that Ned's approach called a look into the dog's big brown eyes which was not that of welcome. Ned stirred up Clover with a stick, turning him out of the barrel with extremely little consideration for his personal feelings. Clover, thus treated, placed himself as far from his master as possible, on the further side of Ralph, whom he seemed to see by intuition might develop into a friend.

"Well, what ask you for him?" said Ralph coldly.

"Testoon," answered Ned shortly.

"You'll not find many customers if you rate your goods at that price."

"Please yourself," was the rough reply. "It's you that want to buy, not me to sell."

"True, lad. I must reckon to pay well, I see. Is he a good-tempered dog or no?"

"Will be if he's well basted."

"Nay, in good sooth; I should say the right contrary."

"Then you can leave him be, said Ned, with another grin.

Ralph, who had no desire to prolong the colloquy, put his hand into the large bag attached to the girdle which was then used as a purse, and pulled out the shilling demanded as the price of Clover. Ned pocketed the coin in considerable haste, apparently afraid lest the customer should repent of his bargain, and aimed a savage kick at Clover by way of driving him towards his new master.

“Hold there!” said Ralph sternly. “*My* dog shall not be ill-used when I am by.”

Ned stared at him in genuine astonishment. The idea of behaving in a rational and Christian fashion to a dog had never dawned on his imagination. Ralph, wishing to have no more to do with him than was needful, patted Clover, who seemed nearly as much surprised as Ned, and tying a string to his collar, with which he had come provided, led the dog away. As he entered his own door little Tom came running to meet them.

The sight of Tom appeared to produce a transforming effect on Clover. He had followed Ralph in an evidently doubtful and depressed state of mind; but the moment he heard Tom’s voice, ears and tail went joyfully upward, the big brown eyes brightened, and he even ventured on a bark of delight. The friends embraced with great ecstasy.

"You've won him, master!" cried Tom. "I was ever so feared Ned wouldn't leave him go."

"Ned wist how to feather his nest," said Ralph. "He'll be better off with thee."

"Ned loves him not a whit," said Tom pityingly.

Ralph stood looking at the pair as Tom's tiny hand passed affectionately over Clover's back, and Clover's tail and tongue expressed his satisfaction with the change in his circumstances.

"They've been ill used, the pair of 'em!" said Agnes. "Ralph, there's that big barrel that I voided of sugar this morrow; if thou wilt roll it out into the yard, it shall serve well for the dog's bed, and Tom can carry the straw thereto."

"May I lie by Clover, then?" asked Tom wistfully.

"Thou canst creep in when thou hast a mind, so long as thy raiment suffer not," replied Agnes, with a laugh. "Thou wert best knock the nails out, Ralph, or he shall tear his hosen."

"But at night, I mean?" said Tom anxiously.

"Beds be made to sleep in of a night," said Agnes, smiling.

A look of trouble came into Tom's small face, but he said no more. Seated on the stones of the back-yard, Clover gravely watched the arrangements made

for him, and as soon as they were completed, took possession of the barrel with an air of proprietorship, evidently realising that he had changed hands. Tom trotted obediently into the house when called, but every now and then through the evening, when at liberty, ran to the yard door for a look at Clover. But when bedtime arrived Tom's uneasiness was manifest.

"What ails thee, my lad?" said Agnes, as Tom was silently following her upstairs.

"Clover," said Tom, in an unsteady voice.

"Why, thou wilt not miss him when thou art asleep."

"He'll miss me," said considerate Tom.

"He'll see thee in the morning."

Tom made no reply. Agnes led him into the little room which had been the chamber of her own children, and which it had not cost her nothing to give up to their successor. When Tom was undressed he knelt down to say his prayers.

"What prayers dost thou say, my lad?"

"Haven't said none since mother went away, only 'Our Father,' and 'Pray God make me a good lad, and let Ned from kicking Clover,' and 'Now I lay me.' That's all."

"And before mother went, what saidst?"

"Used to say the cradle, but I've forgot it."

"The 'cradle!'" repeated Agnes, in perplexity.

"Ay, the cradle," said Tom, with calm iteration.

"How beginneth it?" asked Agnes, after a moment's reflection.

"Why, 'Cradle,' to be sure!"

"Dear heart!—dost mean the Credo?"

"May be; I always said 'cradle.' Isn't it as good as tother?"

"Scarce, methinks. We'll leave that, Tomlin, till thou art a bit bigger. Thou canst say the rest."

Tom obeyed, saying the Lord's Prayer in English, an unusual thing at that time, and a plain indication that his mother had been a Gospeller, or Protestant; repeated his verses correctly, and "Pray God make me a good boy." There he stopped abruptly, and looked up into Agnes's face.

"What shall I say about Clover? Ned can't kick him now; so 'tis no good asking that. Shall I say, 'Make Clover a good dog'?"

"Ay, if thou wilt," said Agnes quietly.

She had sense enough to know that the child must not only think and understand, but also pray, as a child, and that the best way to make prayer real to him was to suffer him to pray about those matters

for which he really cared. So Tom finished his prayer in his own way, and scrambled into the little bed with its bright-red woollen coverlet.

"This is soft," he said appreciatively, as the curly head nestled down into the pillow. "I wish Clover could come too."

"Clover will be right comfortable," said Agnes.

"Ay," Tom admitted, "only he'll miss me."

There was a slight break in the little voice. Agnes smoothed down the curly hair and kissed him, told him to go to sleep, and went downstairs into her little parlour, where Ralph sat waiting for her.

"I must see to new raiment for the little lad first thing to-morrow," she observed. "His gear is no better than rags. Poor little soul! He hath been evil used of that lad Ned, without I err."

"Have a care thou run not to the other end of the pole, good wife," said Ralph, smiling gravely. "Get what the child needeth for decent and wholesome wear, but prink him not out in garments too fine for his station."

"I thought of a worsted cassock, and a gaberdine of cloth, with a gown of brown-blue for winter, furred with coney, and faced with moccadewe.* Were that too fine?"

* A kind of velveteen.

"Methinks thou mightest leave the moccadewe."

"And an holy-day gown of puke,* furred with lamb; sure that shall serve the turn. And what sayest to a velvet cap?"

"For a lad that shall be a grocer's apprentice. Nay, Annis, thou wist better. Prithee bring us not under fine for setting forth the child too bravely."

For in those days people dressed, not as they pleased, but as the Government pleased; and if they overstepped the allotted boundaries they suffered in pocket.

Little Tom was no sooner dressed the next morning than he ran into the yard to inquire how Clover had passed the night, and was received in an ecstatic manner. After that came breakfast, which consisted of white herrings, bread and butter, pancakes, and small ale. Ralph then took his place in the shop, while Agnes tied on a hood, and, taking Tom by the hand, set out for the haberdasher's, draper's, hosier's, capper's, girdler's, and shoemaker's shops on his behalf. She succeeded, however, in making only three of these calls in one morning.

"Pray you, mistress, whither go you?" Tom wanted to know.

"To the draper's, Tomlin, to buy stuff for thy shirts

* A colour between russet and black.

and coat; then to the tailor, to have thee measured for clothes."

"To Mistress Wilks?" inquired Tom anxiously.

Agnes's resolve was taken at once. "No, not there; to Master Jenyns, at the Cat and Fiddle."





CHAPTER IV

THE LITTLE PHILOSOPHER



ARRIVED at the draper's, Agnes bought half an ell of canvas for two shirts for Tom. Canvas was a name which covered a greater variety of material than now, and stuffs were evidently woven wider, considering the quantity required for garments. The canvas cost threepence. She next bought fustian for a gaberdine, at tenpence per yard; buckram to line it at ninepence; cloth for the gown at half-a-crown was the last item. Then she called at the pinner's, where she purchased five hundred pins for a halfpenny. The tailor's stood next on her list, and here she left her parcels while Tom was measured to his small heart's discontent, until he was sorely weary of the discipline. It was now time to see about

dinner, and Agnes hurried home to prepare a shoulder of fresh mutton, stuffed with onions and oysters—a real luxury when fresh meat could only be had between Midsummer and Michaelmas. This was the last dish at the meal; it was preceded, first by basins of broth, and then by puffs made with cheese curd, eggs, and nutmegs. Tom evidently enjoyed his dinner, which was much better fare than he had received from Mistress Wilks, or from his poverty-stricken mother; but he was chiefly concerned to know that Clover would have his dinner in a satisfactory manner. Agnes gratified him by giving him an ample dish of scraps to take to Clover, bidding him return to her when the ceremony was accomplished.

“Now, Tom, we go to the haberdasher’s.”

“What for, mistress?”

“For garters, laces, and leather points for thee. Then to the hosier’s, for thy hosen; and, if time serve, to the capper’s and girdler’s likewise.”

The haberdasher’s was soon reached, and a pleasant-looking young woman, standing behind the counter, was greeted by Agnes with, “Well, Rose, how do you this fine even?”

“I am metely well, I thank you, Annis. Where gat you yon little lad?”

Tom's history was given, sundry pairs of garters inspected, and a pair of green knitted ones chosen.

"Methought I saw you yesterday at Lambeth," observed Rose, as she rolled them up.

"Ah, I saw not you, though I did count I caught a glance of Master Chowne in the crowd. Know you what is become of the image?"

"Oh, ay; burned at Chelsea this morrow."

"She was verily burned, then?"

"Truly was she; and my Lord Privy Seal himself at the doing of it."

"Be folks generally well pleased, or no?"

"Well," said Rose, as she reached down the leather points, "many blameth it, and as many allow. Master Newell, of St. Mary Wool church parish, he saith he is blithe he hath lived to see the day; but Master Nicolson, the skinner, at the Dog's Head in the Pot, will needs have it a judgment must come upon the land for despising of our Lady. These points be a penny the piece; may be you would have cheaper?"

"Ay, three or four the penny shall be plenty good enough. In very deed, I see not wherefore judgment should follow the obeying of God's 'hest to do away with all idols."

"You say well, Annis; and I pray you, what despising of our blessed Lady is there in casting of

a wooden log upon the fire? 'Tis not burned because it favoureth our Lady, in no wise, but because it is an idol, which God contemneth."

"I marvel if it do favour our Lady. How know they that made it what she was like?"

Rose laughed. "Marry, mine husband said he gave no credit thereto, for an' she were no better-favoured than that lump of wood, quoth he, she was but a foul woman in the face. Was it silken laces you asked, or worsted?"

"Worsted, an't please you."

"A halfpenny each, these long ones; but we have shorter at three for the halfpenny."

"The shorter may well serve; they be but for the child. Well, the work is begun of a goodly fashion; God give it as good an ending! How many images were burned?"

"Three, I heard tell—our Lady of Walsingham, of Ipswich, and of Willesden. Oh, I cast no doubt the work shall go on. Things become too far, methinks, to turn again now."

"Ah, I would I were surer thereof!" said Agnes, as she laid her money on the counter.

"Nay, what would you have trow? The greater monasteries dissolved, and the lesser to follow; the roods all destroyed, and the Pope renounced by every

of—the points of silk ribbon be eightpence the piece.”

The last words, so incongruous with the first, followed so hastily upon them, after a momentary pause, that it was patent to the poorest understanding that Rose Chowne had been suddenly startled, and had seen some good reason for closing her sentence in a manner very different from that of its commencement. Agnes looked up and beheld the cause.

The cause was a tall, spare, gaunt-looking man of nearly six feet in height, with a sallow complexion, a long nose, and a very ill-tempered aspect. Without awaiting his turn, he inquired “where was Master Chowne,” as if he were a judge demanding of the warder his excuse for suffering a prisoner to escape from justice. Being informed by Rose in a deprecating flutter that her husband was absent at that moment, he desired her to show him a camlet purse, with a visible access of displeasure. Poor man! he was not without excuse.

But yesterday the word of Cæsar might
Have stood against the world, now lies he there,
And none so poor to do him reverence.

Only a few weeks before, the Prior of the Grey Friars of Newgate had been one of the grandees of

the land ; every knee bent where his eyes turned, and every cap was lifted in honour. Now all was in the dust. His title was abolished, his honours had disappeared, his sceptre was broken ; the monks over whom he had ruled absolute were dispersed beyond recall, and the house wherein he had held supreme sway was granted to a despicable extern. Nay, worse yet, he has just been called upon to set his name to a document harrowing to his very soul, wherein he, the Warden of the House of St. Francis, in the City of London, solemnly asserted that he did “profoundly consider that the perfection of a Christian living doth not consist in ceremonies, wearing of a grey coat, disguising ourself after strange fashions, decking and becking, in girding ourselves with a girdle full of knots, and other like Papistical ceremonies, wherein we have been most principally practised and misled in times past ; and that being minded hereafter to follow the precepts of Christ and the Apostles, he resigned into the hands of the King’s Majesty the aforesaid House of St. Francis, with all the possessions and emoluments of the same.” The Prior was absolutely convinced in his own mind that the perfection of a Christian life did consist in the diligent practice of these very Papistical ceremonies, and that the resignation of the house and possessions to the King was as wicked in

principle as it was bitterly unpalatable in action ; but he dared not refuse his signature. For years before he had solemnly declared that the Bishop of Rome had usurped the name of Pope, and had, or ought to have, in England or elsewhere, no more authority or jurisdiction than any other bishop. He did not believe that either. But what was he to do, poor man ? The Defender of the Faith (namely, of that faith which commended itself to his Majesty's mind, and suited his convenience, at that moment) would as soon have burned the miserable Prior in Smithfield as have put on his new riding-coat of crane-coloured cloth, gored with russet velvet. The Prior knew that ; and the King knew that he knew it. And he did not want to be burned in Smithfield—any more than you do, my gentle reader. Under the circumstances, having just signed that aggravating but inevitable declaration, the Prior's ill-temper, however improper, was by no means unnatural.

The absence of Mr. Chowne was another small vexation. It obliged the holy man to submit to be served by a woman ; thus interfering with one of his holiest customs, namely, never to look a woman in the face. Despite these difficulties, however, the Prior bought his purse and paid for it, and, muttering a few words which might have been either a blessing, a malediction

or a growl at the cost of the article, relieved the two women of his unwelcome presence.

"Think you we shall ever see the like of him set any more in high place?" demanded Rose.

"Nay, that cannot I tell," replied Agnes; "but, if we do not so, our children may."

"That do not I credit. Were you there to see the Friars thrust forth of their cloister? I was; and I warrant you I heard much rejoicing, but never a word of displeasure."

"Ah, that differeth. I heard divers pitiful sayings touching the Black Ladies of St. Helen's."

"Well, may be all were not alike. But I ensure you, as to most folks, men loveth too well their liberty to desire to bind a yoke on their necks yet again."

"St. Paul found it not so with the Galatians, trow," said Agnes, with a smile, as she took up her basket to depart.

"Ay, they were an ill set, I mind; very simpletons, when they had come forth into the light, to desire to draw back into the darkness."

"Be we so much wiser, trow?"

"What, you look for us to make the like blunder?"

"I do, when a little time be past, and we have had a chance to forget that we once suffered. The children of Israel were none so far from the house of bondage

When they began to look back with longing to the flesh-pots of Egypt. There be idle men and women enow, that love better to be fed of doles from the monasteries than to gird up their loins and set to work."

"Marry, and I would by my good will lay a stout stick about their backs," said Rose, laughing. "I cannot abear idleness, and that is the very truth. I do ensure you I am well apaid to see so many of these lazy loons of monks forced to set them a-work."

"And I likewise; but I am sorry for the aged men and the weakly. 'Tis hard on them, methinks."

"Everything comes hard on some folks. Their own kin should keep them; and they that have none, let them get them to the houses that be left of their Order on account of such. They have lived on the fat of the land and robbed the poor long enough; let them make shift with the lean now."

Agnes gave a little shake of her head as she took Tom's hand in hers. She admired monks and monachism no more than Rose; but still less did she love to witness the infliction of human suffering, and her compassion was not straitened by the fact that the sufferer might have deserved it.

“Well, good morrow, Rose! Now, Tomlin, we must hie to the Saracen’s Head for a girdle.”

“Mistress!” said Tom meditatively.

“Well, my lad?”

“You be laying out a deal of money on me.”

“Thou lackest much laying out, my boy.”

“Nobody save you thought what I lacked,” said Tom shrewdly, “but only what it listed them to spare.”

“Men do commonly give after that fashion. God gives the first way; and His children should act like Him.”

“He hasn’t many, has He?”

“No, Tom, very few.”

“I thought so much. Mistress, I pray you be not angered, but I think you are one of them.”

“God grant it, little Tom!” said Agnes feelingly.

“Mistress, oughtn’t I to be a right good lad, for all you be doing for me?”

“I cannot deny it, Tom.”

“Then hadn’t I better ask God to make me good, three times of a day, so as He won’t forget?”

“No fear of that, my boy. He would have thee do well more earnestly than thou canst desire it. But thou mayest ask Him as many times in the day as it list thee.”

"I must try hard, too," added Tom reflectively, as they went up the step of the Saracen's Head, "else may be He'll think I don't mean it."


Agnes smiled approvingly on the little philosopher as she turned into the girdler's shop.





CHAPTER V

RETROGRESSION

 O you have verily taken to the little lad, and for good?" asked Margaret Ettys, as Agnes and Tom came up to the counter. "May the good Lord repay you! A girdle, did you want for him?—leather, trow? These be twopence the piece, and these a penny."

Agnes selected one of the cheaper kind, and laid her penny on the counter.

"Did you hear what came of yond' image, or no?"

"Ay; burned yestre'en at Chelsea, so Rose Chowne saith."

"Sure? Then I'm glad we are well rid thereof. I would with all mine heart they'd burn another dozen."

"They did burn other two belike—her of Willesden, and her of Ipswich."

"Did they, now? Well, for sure! I could well-nigh wish I had been there. But, all said and done, Annis Clervis, when they be stripped of their brave clothes and glistening jewels, they be a set of as ugly images as ever a man clapped his eyes on."

"Truth, Meg; yet that maketh them, for idols, neither the better nor the worser."

"Ay, you're right there. Trust me, I'm full glad the King's Highness is thus inclined, and my Lord Privy Seal likewise. We shall pass now, I hope, from good to better. Monks and images being ridded, mass should come next."

"Ah, methinks that shall ask some time. There be many shall draw bridle ere they leap that fence. Bethink thee how many there be, all over the land, with whom to hear mass is all the religion they have."

"They were as good to have none, then," said Margaret, replacing on the shelf the box from which she had taken the girdles. "Let 'em go and gather up a bit more."

Agnes laughed. "Hast ne'er noted, Meg, that they which have little or no religion be they that are commonly feared to be cumbered with any more?"

They that have tasted that the Lord is good do presently desire more of His goodness; but they that have never tasted be they that will not taste."

"As saith old Master Hasilbury," said Margaret, laughing in her turn, "that if a man have but one text of Scripture, that he luggeth in on all occasions, it shall be, 'Be not righteous over much;' but, quoth he, you shall rarely hear such an one to go forward with 'Be not over much wicked, neither be thou foolish.' By the same token, Annis, heardest Father Wisdom his last sermon at the Cross?"

"That did I not, Meg. A good discourse, was it?"

"As brave as you might lightly look for. Eh! he did scourge them that were fearful and unready to come to the front of God's army. 'The children of Ephraim' that 'turned back in the day of battle'—that was his text. Eh, but he did give it 'em! If ever days of persecution should come again, you may look for him in the vanguard. *He'll* never buy his ease with denying the truth."

"God grant he never may!—and yet, Meg, to speak truth, it is not alway he which shall cry bravest in the market-place in time of peace, that shall prove the boldest and truest man to his King in the hour of danger. I have ere now seen some of those bold spirits run to hide their heads like very cravens—

yea, it might be on a false rumour of the foe's approach."

"Ah, may be some may ; but he'll not."

"God keep us all from that day, if His will be!" said Agnes, with a little sigh. "Howbeit, I trust no such perilous time be nigh."

It is no cause for wonder that many in the year 1538 should have thought that the Protestant warfare was wellnigh accomplished, and that the Roman snake would never again rear its head in England. The monasteries had been dissolved, the "Pilgrimage of Grace" suppressed, the English Bible set forth by authority, the heresy laws repealed, the Pope's supremacy abolished, and the roods and images destroyed. What could ordinary men expect in reason but that matters would proceed according to this beginning, and that a few years more would see the total overthrow of false doctrine and superstition?

But the very next year saw the reaction. The pendulum swung back to the other side. Not many weeks of 1539 were over when the Gospellers plainly saw, not only that the progress of truth was stayed, but that those in authority were retracing their steps and again re-establishing the follies and corruptions which they had before abolished, building again the

things they had destroyed, and showing themselves transgressors.

“Have you heard what happened yestre’en and this morrow, Master Clervis?” asked Mistress Castle, as she came into the grocer’s shop on the evening of the 5th of April 1539, which was the day after Good Friday.

“Nay, good neighbour, that have I not; I have been somewhat too much busied serving forth sugar and reasons”—by which Ralph meant raisins—“and I reckon my customers have been no great news-mongers, so no tidings have come my way. What is it, trow?”

“Well, as I came hither, I met with Master Newell; and trust me, but he hath a tale to tell!”

“Very like; that happeth oft enough. What song doth he sing this even?”

Mistress Castle, who certainly could not be described as no newsmonger, set down her half-filled basket on the counter, and prepared for a comfortable unloading of her well-filled mind.

“May be, an’ you come for aught that may be handled,” observed Ralph, with a twinkle in his eye, “you were best name it at once, and I can weigh and measure while you talk.” He knew that he was booked for a considerable spell of narration when that narrator was the source of it.

“Well, dear heart, now!—what did I come for?” demanded Mistress Castle of her ill-regulated memory. “Oh, ay, for sure! A tapnet of Malaga figs, an’ it like you, and a frail of Jordan almonds, and a sugar-loaf. I could serve me of a barrel of brown soap belike. And how much be reasons by the pound, I pray you?”

“Reasons Alicants, five farthings; but reasons of Corance* be dear—threepence the pound this morrow.”

“Saints worshipped might they be!—have you e’er the face to ask such a price, Master Clervis?”

“I have in truth, Mistress Castle, seeing ’tis very little less they cost me.”

“Well, be sure!—and you call yourself a Christian man!” responded the lady, with a serio-comic air. “I see, I shall have no reasons of Corance in my pudding. Weigh me out, an’ you will so, ten pound of reasons Alicants; I reckon I must be content with them to-day. Weigh ’em well, now; give me good measure.”

“Ten pounds of sixteen ounces the pound: you ask no more, do you?”

“I guess you’ll not give it me an’ I do,” said Mistress Castle, laughing. “Come now, I’ll get to

* Currants.

my story. Master Newell saith matters be all turning about, Master Clervis; the good work done like to be all undone, save the mark! O' last Holy Thursday, saith he, the King's grace went a procession about the Court at Westminster and in the White Hall, and my Lord Cobham bare the sword afore His Grace, with other nobles a great multitude, and——"

"Ay, I heard of that," said Ralph, taking a few raisins from the heap in the scale, and letting two or three drop back as it swung slightly upward.

"Very good!—but heard you how the chapel was garnished? All the Apostles upon the altar, and mass by note, and the organs playing as fine as you please: and, Master Clervis"—her voice sank almost to a whisper—"Master Newell saith he was told by one that was there present that yestre'en the King's Grace crept to the cross from the chapel door upward devoutly, and so served the priest to mass that same day—his own person, Master Clervis!—kneeling on His Grace's knees. What make you of that, now?"

The answer was a grave shake of Ralph's head; but before he had time to answer in words Mistress Castle began again.

"And, look you, every Sunday the King doth

receive holy bread and holy water, and in all London, 'tis proclaimed, no man upon pain of death to speak against all laudable ceremonies. Good lack, but 'tis a black look-out for us."

"Is it so?" replied Ralph, with a smile. "Do you then desire to speak against laudable ceremonies?"

"Nay, no mocking, Master Clervis! You know well enough what I would be at. But of a truth, things be changed. Ay, and it's none so easy, neither, to say what shall like them in power, when only this week there was one hanged for eating of flesh upon a Friday contrary to the King's commandment, and nigh every week there be that suffer for denying of the supremacy. Eh, dear, dear! Master Clervis, think you not these be main hard times to live in?"

"I never yet wist any times that were easy to live well in, Mistress Castle. And yet," added Ralph thoughtfully, "the hardest of all, methinks, is to live but half well. 'Tis an ill shift to try to make the best of both worlds. They have the straightest path for their feet that live for God only."

"'Tis a path hath led some folks to Smithfield, Master Clervis."

"Ay, it ends very oft on the hill of Golgotha, and but very seldom in the banquet-hall of Herod.

Yet I slack not to say, 'tis easier walking even so than stumbling in that uneven way of time-serving that so many love. I had liefer be John by the Master's Cross than be Peter weeping bitterly."

"Well, the Lord keep us all safe," said Mistress Castle, lifting her basket. "I'll send our Polydore for the soap and fruits, Master Clervis, if you'll give me the sugarloaf in my basket. And how much owe I to you now?"

"Three shillings the figs, my mistress; the like for the almonds; sevenpence the sugarloaf; and the soap forty shillings. In all, six-and-forty shillings and sevenpence."

"Lack-a-day! but folks should be made o' money that come to speak with you! Well, well! folks must eat, I guess. Have here four royals and an angel. Now I lack a penny."

"With that can I furnish you. You ask no dates nor prunes, trow? I had fresh in of both last week, from a right good hand; I can ensure you they be principal."

"I can ensure you, Master Clervis, I have not another halfpenny to spare. If I were my Lord's Grace o' Suffolk, I'd deal with you; I love dates as well as e'er an one. But, alack! my purse showeth

the bottom, and that plain; so good even to you. How doth good Mrs. Clervis?—and the little lad you took to, doth he give you ease or no?”

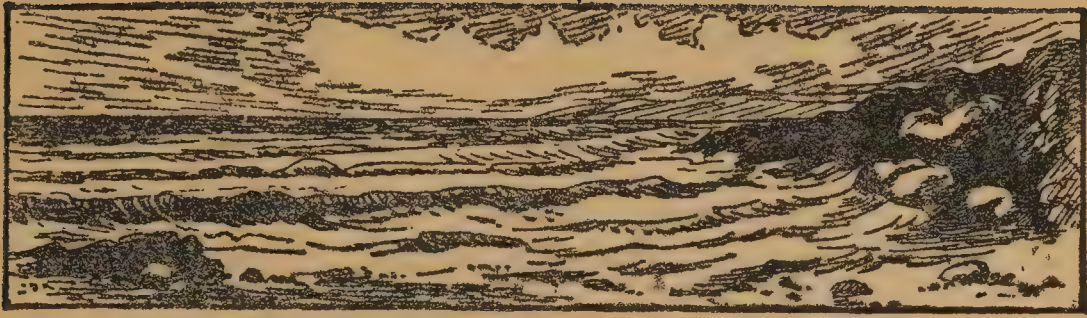
“My wife doth well, I thank you; and as for Tom, he hath been well bred up of his mother, and I cast no doubt shall make a man one day.”

“You think to bring him up to your own calling, trow?”

“I do so. ’Tis the best I can do for him; and having none to inherit now, without it please God to dispose otherwise,” said Ralph, with a rather sorrowful smile, “this Eliezer of Damascus must be mine heir.”

“Well, if so be, I hope he’ll turn out a comfort to you; but ’tis oft a thankless task at best fetching up other folks’ childre. Good even, I’ll send our Polydore over for the rest.”





CHAPTER VI

LITTLE MISTRESS ROSE



AS Mistress Castle walked out, Mistress Ettys and another woman walked in.

“Good morrow, Master Clervis. We be not customers, but be come to visit good Mistress Annis; pray you, is she within?”

“Ay, Mistress Ettys, and shall be right fain to behold you, if you will take the pain to go forward into the parlour.”

A rather dark passage behind the shop led to the parlour, itself light and pleasant, and lying to the back, looking out into one of those gardens which the citizens had planted in times gone by in order to divert their wives from their love of gossip and scandal. Here the visitors found Agnes busy with needlework, while Tom, seated on a

buffet at her feet, was equally or more absorbed in the preparation of his Monday lessons. The door stood open into the garden, and on the steps which led down to it was crouched Clover, with one eye on Tom and the other on the world at large.

“Why, Mistress Ettys !” said Agnes, rising, “truly you be right welcome. And this worthy mistress with you——”

“Is Mistress Margaret Ambsworth, and my very good friend ; I pray you be acquainted. She dwelleth without Aldgate, and is one of us.”

Agnes knew what that meant—that Margaret Ambsworth was a Protestant.

“And how go matters with you, good friend ?”

Mistress Ettys glanced at Tom before replying, as if she preferred his room to his company.

“Tomlin,” said Agnes, responsive to the silent hint, “run thou and ask master to send me in a two-three nutmegs !”

“O-a-t, cat ; f-a-t, fat ; h-a-t, hat ;” was Tom’s irrelevant answer. “I can say it now, mistress.”

“Good lad ! Then when thou hast fetched the nutmegs, thou mayst run in the garden and play thee with Clover, while I call thee in.”

Little Tom’s eyes brightened, and he ran off.

"We came to tell thee, Annis," said Mistress Ettys in a confidential whisper, "that on Tuesday, in the even, shall there be a gathering in our house, and Master Taverner looketh to be there, if God will. I had some hope of Friar Ward, but I trow we shall scarce come by him, and Master Taverner can spare us but one even. I would it were more."

"Have you essayed Father Rose?"

Mistress Ettys and her friend exchanged an amused glance.

"Well, now, 'tis passing strange you should ask it! Here were we, Meg Ambsworth and I, taking thought how to come at him to cause him to preach another even, for, look you, we are neither of us acquaint with him."

"But we are," said Agnes simply.

"The very thing we should fain have! She saith to me—Meg doth—'Have you no friend that could help at this pinch?' 'Truly,' quoth I, 'there is Mistress Clervis, that is very nigh hand in glove with Father Rose his mistress, and I promise you she shall handle the matter for us.' And no sooner had I spoken than Meg was foot-hot to come hither, and make you the motion ere another hour were over. Now, good Annis, wilt break the matter to him?"

"That will I, with a very good will. Would you have it done incontinent?*" There is time ere it be dusk, methinks, if we have a care to lose none."

"Well, if you could be so good! It were much to mine ease to settle the matter."

"Go to, then," said Agnes; and she stepped to the window and called Tom, who came running in at once, only waiting for a kiss on Clover's head.

"'Tis not yet thy bedtime, Tom," said she; and Tom's gratification was manifest. "I would have thee run above, and bring my black sarcenet bonnet with the red muffler, my long blue cloak, and my partlet of russet taffeta. Thou wist where they be. If thou canst not carry them all at once——"

"I can carry two on 'em!" announced Tom manfully.

"Good. Have a care thou soil them not, and be hasteful."

"I see you use the little man to work," said Mistress Ettys, with a smile, as Tom ran off.

"I do so rather for his sake than mine; oft sending him for that I might better fetch myself

* Immediately.

if I looked but to mine own ease. Children lack training, both soul and body."

"Ay, they do so!" responded Mistress Ettys emphatically.

Tom was back in a moment, stumbling under the folds of the blue cloak, which, both for length and weight, was almost too much for his powers. But twice the difficulty would never have extorted that confession from his lips.

"Now run to master," said Agnes, as she took the things from him with a smile, "and tell him I go forth with these two good mistresses, and, may be, shall be somewhat late of returning, but I will do mine utmost to be here afore the dusk. Then ask Jennet for the lantern, and bring it me."

Tom reappeared with the lantern before Agnes was fully dressed for her expedition.

"Tomlin, I trust thee to come within when the church clock chimeth the half-hour if I be not back aforetime, and go to Jennet to be put abed. Wilt be a good lad, and so do?"

Tom nodded, with a sensation as if the honour of England were left in his keeping, and the three women went out through the shop, Agnes receiving from Ralph a nod of assent to her proceedings. After a short walk they arrived at a house in

Thames Street, where the preacher was then residing for a short time.*

The room into which they were ushered was small and low. All rooms were low at that date, and the majority of the Protestant clergy, especially the few who were married, were not among the wealthier members of society. In this little room sat a woman of some six-and-twenty years, sewing, and singing in a low voice. The words sung were not English, and the first exclamation that broke from her lips was not English either.

“*Ha ! c’est Agnès !* I am ease to see you, *hermana mia*.† Sit you, I pray. Your friends ?”

Agnes answered the last of the lively sentences which followed each other so rapidly.

“My friend, Mistress Margaret Ettys, and her friend—mine also, now — Mistress Margaret Ambsworth.”

“*Voilà ! un bouquet de marguerites !*” said Mrs. Rose with a bright laugh. “How you say ?—daisies. I also, I, am Marguerite. And how goes it with the good husband, *mi bien ?*” ‡

“He fares well, I thank you. But I pray you,

* The chronology of Mr. Rose’s life at this period is extremely vague and confused. He was preaching in London, by licence of Lord Audley, about 1537-40, but no exact dates can be given.

† My sister.

‡ My own, my darling.

is Father Rose within?—for our visit hath ado with him, and time presseth somewhat.”

“*Mais oui?* He is *planté là*—always with his books. I will fetch him to speak you—yes?”

She laid down her work and left the room, returning directly, followed by a tall, spare, grave-looking man attired in the clerical cassock. Until a much later date than this, no clergyman laid aside his cassock in the house.

“Good den, Father Rose, I am loth to call you from your studies, but truly mine occasion is somewhat urgent.”

“Good den, friend,” was the answer, in a voice unusually rich and musical. “I were loth to tarry at my books when the Lord would have me elsewhere. Pray you advertise me of your need.”

“This my friend, Father, is Mistress Ettys, whose name methinks shall not be unknown to you. She is wife unto Master Ettys the girdler, of the Saracen’s Head in Friday Street, where, as you well know, ours oft assemble in the even.”

“I know it, and would pray her of better acquaintance. Your husband have I spoken withal sundry times, my mistress.”

Margaret Ettys rose and dropped a courtesy. “Under your good pleasure, Father, we do much

desire to set forth God's Word in our house on divers evenings this Easter-tide; and if your leisure serveth, we would right gladly entertain you for that occasion, if I make not too bold to ask it."

"That will I do full readily, and I thank you. There be not many that are willing for this work as you be, and there are like to be fewer now backward steps have been taken."

"Then you think, Father, the backward steps shall go yet further?" said Agnes sadly.

"I fear so much. 'Tis ever easier to go back than forward in the true way, and there be many more will help the same. Man is apt to grow weary of well-doing far sooner than of evil-doing. When desire you my presence, good Sister?"

"Sir, we have but one even provided for, the which is Tuesday next; Master Taverner is pledged therefor. Any Tuesday or Friday even, betwixt now and Holy Thursday next, that shall serve your convenience, we would be full fain to make ready for you."

"More than one?"

"In very deed, Father, if you could bestow more than one on us, we were most thankful, I do ensure you; I scarce did venture to hope thus far."

Mr Rose took from his pocket a table-book—a

memorandum-book we should call it—and studied it attentively for a moment.

“I can give you,” he said, “two evenings: Friday next and the Tuesday next but one thereafter. Shall they serve?”

“Right well, Father, and to our much content. Mine husband shall be verily blithe to hear such good news.”

“When gather your assemblies—afore dusk?”

“At this time, Father, about seven of the clock; but if any other hour should be to your easement——”

“That shall well apay me. I will be there, if the Lord will. Good even, my Sister. I pray you make my commendations unto my good masters, your husbands.”

Mr. Rose withdrew to his study, which was a tiny corner of his bedroom, holding a chair and table under a small set of hanging book-shelves, which last were laden with his greatest earthly treasures after his wife and mother.

“I do hope the good Father wearieth him not overmuch with his studies,” said Margaret Ettys earnestly. “Were I you, Mistress Rose, I would now and again make some pretence to call him thence. Much study, as Solomon beareth witness, is but a weariness to the flesh.”

"He would thank you, you think?" answered Mistress Rose, with her merry laugh. "My friend, he is weary only when his books be shut up. That he love not, I you ensure. The book may weary the flesh, but no book—that weary the soul much the more."

"Well, it caps me, it doth!" said Mistress Ambsworth. "These years gone, we had Father Garnet in our house some weeks; and I promise you tearing of him from his book to come and dine was worser than putting a fractious child abed. I looked into 'em once, when he was forth of his chamber; and, dear heart! whatever he could see in 'em thus to set him o' love with 'em! Why, that I first gat hold of, it wasn't words at all—rounds and squares and tails—neither words nor pictures they wasn't, nor yet maps. I suppose he could make some'at of 'em, but I couldn't. They'd ha' made me as dizzy as a weathercock if so be I'd kept on a-staring at 'em, which I thank the saints I didn't."

In these emphatic terms Mistress Ambsworth couched her impressions of Mr. Garnet's Hebrew Bible.

"Well, now, what think you?" responded Margaret Ettys, with that ambition to break the record which besets humanity. "Last winter Dr.

Barnes his brother tarried with us a while, and he had a book all as bad, I warrant you. It lay open afore him one morrow when I came to ask at him what manner of sauce best liked him with his capons, and it was all full of figures, and little lines and crosses—never a word in it, save now and again an *a* or a *b* here and there, or somewhat like. ‘Well master,’ says I, ‘whatever call you that?’ ‘Oh,’ saith he, ‘’tis all gibberish.’ ‘Truly,’ quoth I, ‘and you could not fashion a better name for it, for ’tis gibberish from top to bottom.’ Dear heart, how he did laugh! ‘Forsooth, mistress,’ saith he, ‘I said not gibberish, but ally gibber,’ or some’at like that. ‘Nay, you were best stick to the first,’ said I, ‘for ’tis the meetest name for such stuff.’ Verily, these scholars do passing strangely.”

Mrs. Rose, though a scholar’s wife, was far from being one herself, and knew no more about algebra than Margaret Ettys.

“Well, friends, I reckon we were best tarry no longer,” suggested Agnes; “the dusk draweth on apace.”

“Ay, it doth so. Good den, Mistress Rose, and we are rarely beholden to you.”

As Agnes went upstairs after parting from her friends, she paused for a moment at the little bed

with the red coverlet. A small oval hillock visible under the bed-clothes, and a few curls appearing above them, bore witness that Tom had kept troth.

“God bless thee, my little lad!” said Agnes softly to the sleeping child, “and make thee a blessing to us both.”





CHAPTER VII

MR. ROSE'S SERMON

THE Saracen's Head, in Friday Street, where Master William Ettys carried on the business of a girdler, was a large, roomy house, which had seen better days. At that date the City was slowly changing its character, and, from a town comprising gentlemen's houses and gardens, becoming the crowd of shops and warehouses which it is now. The time had been when royal palaces stood in Budge Row and Lombard Street, the Prince of Wales dwelt in Thames Street, and noble mansions clustered thickly about Paul's Wharf and Fish Street Hill. They had nearly all fled westward, leaving but one here and there of the lesser peers to hold his court still in the deserted City; and the old houses which had once been trodden

by mailed feet, and swept by princely robes, echoed to the tradesman's cry of "What do you lack?" and were hung with cloths and worsteds patronised by citizens' wives.

Behind Master Ettys' shop, where an earl had once bowed before his royal guests, lay a large room, in past days a banqueting chamber, and now a very convenient room for storing stock. It was lined with shelves all round the walls, which closed doors here and there converted into cupboards, and these were well stocked with girdles of all sizes, fashion, and value. Twice every week during Easter-tide this hall was filled with benches, and at the further end a table and chair were set for the preacher. Matters had not yet come to such a pass that it was actually dangerous to frequent these assemblies; but they were known to be frowned on by the authorities as highly irregular, and in order to keep out spies who might report the proceedings, with a few falsehoods to spice them, a particular fashion of knock was devised, varied from one time to another, and known only to the initiated, whereby the doorkeeper might recognise that the applicant was a safe person to admit. Those who appeared on the Tuesday evening with which we are now concerned went into

the shop as if customers, and, going up to the counter, gave a peculiar gesture with a finger of the right hand, thus indicating their desire to be admitted to the conventicle. A few, well known to the girdler, went straight forward without this ceremony. A low, dark passage brought them to the door of the hall beyond, where each gave two single knocks, and quickly afterwards seven little hasty raps together. At each appeal of this sort the door was silently opened by young Gervase Ettys, who acted as porter, and the one who had knocked passed within.

The hall filled quietly, but with tolerable rapidity, the hearers being of both sexes and of all ages above childhood. There were no children, save a few infants, whose mothers could not come without them. Each took his seat on the bench by the last comer, and those who were acquainted, as very many were, conversed in low tones until the hour appointed. The clock of St. Matthew's Church had just struck seven, when the door opened to admit a little group consisting of the Ettys' family, the preacher and his wife, and some half-dozen more who came with them. They passed up to the daïs at the further end, where they took their places.

There was no singing. That proceeding would

scarcely have been wise. Had Mr. Ettys filled his hall with riotous persons, and made night hideous by roaring songs in praise of strong drink or any other favourite vice, the authorities would have been silent; but the praises of God were not to be sung in an irregular manner. So the voices were still, and, after a moment of anticipation, Mr. Rose said, "Let us pray."

It was not a long prayer, but it was a pithy one. The dying petition of William Tyndale was its keynote—"Lord, open the eyes of the King of England!" It asked for patience, fortitude, and faith for his subjects; that, if it might be, their lives and property might be safe; but, as a matter of far greater moment, that they might glorify God, whether by life or by death. Then the worshippers rose from their knees. Mr. Rose read the forty-sixth Psalm, and the tenth chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, and, after another short prayer, announced the text on which he proposed to speak that evening. It was a very short one, but it covered a good deal of meaning—"But Jehoshaphat would not." The preacher began by saying that the characters of Scripture history were not fancy pictures, but real portraits of living men, drawn by the unerring hand of God. Some were

for imitation, some for warning; all for instruction. Of some we are distinctly told that they did well, or did evil, in the sight of the Lord; of others we are left to gather the character from the circumstances told in the narrative. And there are a few, like Lot and Jehoshaphat, whose characters we should probably have misjudged wholly had the distinct statement been withheld from us. Beneath the picture of Lot the Holy Ghost has written, "A righteous man;" beneath that of Jehoshaphat that "The Lord was with him," and that he "walked in His commandments." Had it not been so, we might have set down the first as a selfish, covetous man, and the second as a poor, weak creature, constantly vacillating, if not insincere at heart. It takes God to judge a man's sincerity. Men are always apt to mistake inconsistency for insincerity. The Lord looketh on the heart; and He sees in some the faint pulsation of real life where all seems cold and rigid to human eyes, and in others the dark reality of death where man fancies them alive. Let us consider for a little while the character of Jehoshaphat—a common character in this imperfect world. The Jehoshaphats are often very lovable men, and not seldom popular men. The world hates its Elijahs, and scarcely less its Enochs;

but it often admires and generally fraternises with its Jehoshaphats. They do not make it uncomfortable as Elijah does, nor secretly ashamed as Enoch does. Their utmost expression of non-conformity to its maxims is the mild, "Let not the King say so!" They are ready to reckon their men as its men, and their horses as its horses. They will go with Ahab to Ramoth Gilead, after a decent and religious consultation of the prophets; and, while a genuine prophet of the Lord is unquestionably preferable, they will put up with the prophets of the groves rather than be uncivil to Ahab and Jezebel. The second Table of the Law is their first, and the first is their second. They can give admirable advice; unhappily, their practice does not follow it. They accept—perhaps they go so far as to request—the daughter of Ahab as their son's wife; but they always expect to convert her, and even congratulate themselves on the good they are doing in receiving her into their pious family. That she may draw away their son from following the Lord, to go after Baal and Ashtaroath, they quite decline to regard as a possibility. Had Jehoshaphat lived to see the result of this amiable affinity between himself and Ahab, he would probably have been exceedingly astonished. The Jehoshaphats gene-

rally are. Other men watch them sowing darnel, and know what to expect; but the only crop Jehoshaphat ever allows himself to anticipate is one of damask roses.

It is the sifting times of life which discover the Jehoshaphats. It is seen then whether they are really alive or dead. The Church is sometimes taken by surprise to see men who have vacillated and temporised through life suddenly stand boldly forward to confess Christ when the danger they have been fearing comes upon them. But far more often does she see the standard-bearers fainting—the men of whom she expected everything suddenly prove good for nothing at all.

The sifting time came for Jehoshaphat. Compare the accounts given in 2 Chron. xx. 35–37 and 1 Kings xxii. 48, 49, and it will be seen that the last act recorded of him shows the true man. The Lord rebuked him, by breaking his ships at Ezion-geber; and the result was that he withdrew from his alliance with the house of Ahab. Sifted in God's sieve, he showed that he was corn and not chaff; an inconstant man, but not an insincere; his face set toward Jerusalem, though his walk was so unsteady that it was hard for men to see which way he was really going.

Mr. Rose spoke low and earnestly, but every tone of his clear, flexible voice reached the farthest corner of the hall.

“Brethren,” he said, “be there Jehoshaphats here amongst us? For, if so be, know ye that ye shall be speedily discovered. To the world? Ay, and to the Church, and to your own selves. One of the hardest things to do is to discover a Jehoshaphat to himself. While the world count him little better than Ahab, he is ever prone to think himself a David.

“The sifting time is upon us: yea, it is already begun. For some while the road has been smooth; it savoured as though the devil were asleep, and the chariot-wheels of the Church did run well and lightly. The Egyptians that of old pursued us into the Red Sea were drowned, and we made account that we should see them no more for ever. Alack for the soldier of Israel that in such a day shall unbuckle his armour, and lay his spear up in the tent, and think to feast in peace, when he is not yet come to the good land whither God is leading him. Upon him shall the foe come as a thief in the night, and he shall not know the hour.

“O all ye halting Jehoshaphats! arise up and

be doing ere the storm come upon you. Strengthen the stakes of your tents, and stand to your arms. Make no affinities with Ahab, and break off that ye have entered into. The Israelite that goeth out of his city to feast with the host of Sennacherib in the camp is not like to escape when the angel of the Lord goes forth to smite the host of the Assyrians. And whose fault shall it be if he do not?

“One word more—and a sorrowful word it is. David brought glory to God by his faith and faithfulness, and even Ahab brought it by his punishment; but what glory do the Jehoshaphats bring? They themselves may be saved, yet it is so as by fire. The crowns they cast at their Lord’s feet are tarnished and ungemmed. The light they carry shineth not before men; it is a poor, flickering flame only just visible, whereby no man can see to walk. Nay, they lead many men to stumble that should walk the straighter, if Jehoshaphat’s lamp cast not so unsteady a light.

“Look to yourselves, that your loins be girded well, and your lights burning. Walk while ye have the light. The night cometh. Alack for that virgin whose lamp is going out!”

As Agnes Clervaux passed out of the hall, she

found herself close to her next-door neighbour, Mistress Staniford, the fruiter.

Why we have affixed an extra *er* to such words as fruiter and poulter it would be difficult to say.

"Well, of a truth, we have had a sermon!" said she.

"Ay, in very deed," answered Agnes. "May we all thereby search ourselves to profit. Father Rose's discourses are apt to be searching."

"Think you that sort doth any good?" asked Mistress Staniford doubtfully. "I never make much count of your searching sermons; I love a bit of comfort, I do. We are not all hypocrites, I thank goodness. Why should the man speak as though we were?"

"Mistress," said the voice of William Ettys, behind her, "I trust in God there be many of us that be not hypocrites; but 'tis mostly the Achans that love not Joshua to come interfering in their tents, and the Jehoshaphats that would that troublesome Jehu, the son of Hanani, had tarried at home."

"You were best look to yourself, Will Ettys," was the acrid reply, "and leave other honest folks be."

"So I will, good mistress," says Ettys calmly;

“and if I find any wedge of gold under the ground in my tent, I’ll pluck it forth and show it you afore I render it up to Joshua. But I confess I’m alway a bit afeared when folks would rather keep the candle of the Lord outside their houses, and find such a deal of fault with them that offer to bring it within. It looks, you know, as if they had an inkling o’ somewhat in that corner cupboard that wouldn’t stand too much light.”

“I’ll trouble you to say what there is in my corner cupboard, Mr. William Ettys, if you please!” replied Mistress Staniford irascibly.

“Nay, neighbour, I cannot tell you that. You know—or, if you don’t, you’d best turn in the Lord’s candle, and see if it shows aught that shouldn’t be there. Good even.”





CHAPTER VIII

HOUSEHOLD MATTERS

HEARD you ever a man so wanting in charity as that companion?" demanded Mistress Staniford of Agnes, as William Ettys' cloak disappeared round the corner. "I thank goodness I'm not for ever and the day after suspecting my neighbours. I do hate your strait-laced folk, that cannot see aught out of their own rut, and think the devil is in you if they hear you laugh of a Sunday."

"I never met one of that sort," said Agnes quietly.

"No did you, now? Why, that's Will Ettys all over, and Meg, she's nigh as bad. I'm none so sure as Father Rose doesn't row in the same boat. He's always after what he calls 'halting Gospellers.'"

"Well, they want somebody to be after them," said Ralph, who had heard the last words.

"Ay, ay!" echoed old Mr. Hasilbury, the mercer. "'Tis the folks that lack somebody to be after them that's none so fond o' hearing him a-coming round the corner."

Well, forsooth, you're all of a tune!" said Mistress Staniford, in a displeased style. "I love a bit of charity, I do. Folks as be always fault-finding their neighbours had best look at home, I think."

"So do I," said Ralph, "if they haven't done it at first. But if my neighbour have made an end of cleansing his chamber, and have a bit of soap over, and he come and ask if he can help me to wash mine, I see not wherefore I should be angered with him."

"Ah, but I do," commented Mr. Hasilbury, "if I'm a lazy loon that loves to shift off trouble while to-morrow. I'm very like to be angered with him then, and to bid him take himself and his soap where'll he be welcome."

"'Ye ought to wash one another's feet,'" softly quoted Agnes.

"Wherefore be we unwilling?" asked her husband.

"Some of the washers are very rough," significantly replied the old man; "and some of the washed are ashamed to have it seen how much they lack cleansing. Commonly it is he with the cleanest feet that is the most ready to have his brother wash them."

"Think you with Father Rose that evil times be at hand?"

"Ay; I do so."

"Old folks be alway croakers," said Mistress Staniford.

"Can you stand firm, my mistress, if they come?"

"To be sure I can, and will too. Shan't you?"

"Surely I shall, if the Lord hold me up; and as surely shall I not, if I stand by myself."

"Well, I wouldn't be so white-livered as that! I can hold myself up, I hope, and so I mean to do."

"Then thou wilt fall, Beysilla Staniford," said the old man solemnly.

"God help us all to hold fast!" said Ralph.

"Ay, God help us all!—but most of all them that count they can stand without His help."

Mr. Hasilbury turned into Cheapside, Mistress Staniford towards Thames Street, and the Clervaux went eastwards home.

"I marvel," said Agnes, when they had gone a short distance, "wherefore Father Rose, and Master Hasilbury belike, should think we must needs make ready for times of persecution. I see not much reason to look for the same—leastwise not more than common."

"Seest thou not the clouds a-gathering, sweet heart?" answered Ralph, with a somewhat sorrowful smile.

"Truly, I scarce do," she replied. "In very deed, it has always been the case that they which live godly shall suffer from them that do not so; but they seem to look, methinks, for somewhat more lively, and at the hands of them in authority. Yet do but look at all that hast been done these last few years to cleanse the Church and to spread the truth. Is it like that they in high place shall now turn about, and build up again that they have plucked down? I cannot think it."

"Methinks, dear heart, thou hast taken little note of that which had been done these last few weeks in the plain contrary direction. The heart of man too much resembleth a clock, in that his pendulum swingeth to and fro—to this hand one moment, to that the next. There be few that keep the mean, and be constant to it."

Ralph did not add, though he thought, that King Henry's Majesty was not by any means one of the last-named class. It was not easy to know what would please a potentate who hanged one man in the morning for asserting the Pope's supremacy, and burned another in the afternoon for denying transubstantiation. A pendulum which swung two ways at once was too complicated a piece of machinery to be handled by ordinary people.

"Well, God grant us His grace," returned Agnes, "that we fall not away from His truth. I reckon I were best to keep me to household matters, and not meddle with things too high for me. Such slender folks as we be shall scarce come in the count. Ralph, what wouldst thou desire for dinner to-morrow?"

"Amen to thy first words, dear heart; to the second I would fain agree, but I scarce see the way thereto. It has mostly hitherto been the slender folk that have suffered—of the lay folk would I say. And for the question wherewith thou didst close—why, whatever thou wilt; I pass not a quarter thereon."

The last expression meant that Ralph did not care a farthing about it.

"Would'st love a French pie or an almond pudding?"

"Either, at thy discretion. What hast this even for supper?"

"Sausages and champigneons fricate."

"Then give us for dinner that thou best lovest. If thou hast no choice, ask Tom of his delectation."

"Oh! Tom shall give his voice for the French pie," said Agnes, laughing; "of that I am well assured."

They were now at their own door, where Tom and Clover could be descried peeping through the back gate to watch them coming. It was quite time to prepare the last meal, for the sermon had brought them to a later hour than usual. Agnes hastily laid aside her hood and cloak, put on a cooking apron, and desired Tom to bring her the large bowl wherein the mushrooms were awaiting cookery. Having poured off the black liquor produced by half-stewing them beforehand, she put them into the frying-pan, with a piece of butter, a little parsley, thyme, sweet marjoram, an onion shred very small, salt, and pepper. When the mushrooms were sufficiently done, the gravy from stewing, having been warmed up, was poured over

them, and Tom was trusted, to his great satisfaction, to carry the dish into the dining-room.

The French pie, in the making of which Tom was, the next morning, suffered to assist his mistress, was a marvellous compound, and would not be likely to meet the approval of a modern *chef*. The interior of the pie comprised veal, suet, stoned raisins, prunes, currants, dates, nutmegs, pepper, sugar, caraway seeds, rosewater, and a saucer of verjuice. The strangest mixtures were put together in a pie by our forefathers, whose tastes certainly were not of a delicate order. As to digestibility, the idea appears to have been entirely beside their consideration.

Dinner was just over, and Agnes had fumigated the room by burning rosemary leaves in a censer, when Mistress Staniford rapped at the door.

"Good morrow, Mistress Clervis! I pray you, have you here a few sticks of wood betony you could give me at a pinch? I'm that put to it with business, I cannot run to the apothecary this morrow, and Mistress Boswell she telleth me of a sovereign physic to make our Barnaby sleep—camomile, rye bread, rue, and betony, to be fried with vinegar, nutmeg powder strewn on, and the soles of the feet plastered therewith. I

have all save the betony, and I am scant o' that. Can you aid me?"

"That can I, Mistress Staniford, and will with a very good will. Is your little lad so ill-set to sleep?"

"Eh, he's as restless as a cat on a hot bake-stone. I've tried all manner, and never a bit of good; but Mercy Boswell, she saith one shall sleep with this, be he never so sick. I'm sure I'm right thankful to you!"

Agnes gave her a large bundle of wood betony, of which, and many other medical herbs, she had a quantity hanging from the rafters. To run short of such a thing was a small disgrace in 1539.

"And how goes it with your Jeronymy's cough?" she asked, as she tied up the bundle.

"Oh, 'tis ever so much better. She's pretty nigh lost it, I may say."

"Did you try the garden snails boiled in new milk of a red cow!"

"I did, and a deal of good it did her. The oil of vitriol in plantain water served not so well. Old Bess Horsley, she counselled me to give her oil of oranges, but I tried not that. Well, you're a good neighbour, Mistress Clervis! I thank you

right heartily, and I'll do as much for you another time."

"You're hearty welcome, Mistress Staniford. Oh! will you tell me what you use to stay blood? Our little lad bleedeth at his nose by times, that I would fain know how to stay it if it grow too much."

"Why, I commonly use a cobweb; but my grandmother she was wont to say, dip a linen cloth in the green foam of frogs' spawn three days afore the new moon."

"I scanty think Tom's nose shall tarry the new moon's convenience to bleed," said Agnes humorously. "Methinks the cobweb were more like. Now you speak it, I remember my mother was used to lay a cobweb when we were children; I had forgot the same."

"Ay, you'll find no better cure than that. Your Tom's not weak in the joints, is he? Black snails boiled in May butter is marvellous good for that."*

"No, I am fain to say he suffereth not after that fashion. He is not a weakly child any way, save this bleeding of the nose."

"Well, you try a cobweb; and, if it come off

* All these are genuine recipes of the time.

chestnut-wood, all the better. But, dear heart! I marvel if you can ever find a cobweb in this house. I never saw a house cleaner kept than yours."

"May be I could borrow of some of my neighbours."

"That can you! Mistress Pettifriar, at the Hand and Spade, shall serve the turn right well. I warrant you she sweepeth out her chambers but once in three years. You'll find spiders there, safe as a thief in a mill."

"Then I'll tarry without. I cannot abide dirt and sluttery."

"I told her but this last week, if she mended not, she'd come home by Weeping Cross;* but lack-a-day! you might as well talk to the doorpost. There's your master a-looking in; I dare reckon he'd have me forth, by his good will. Men, they'd have women alway at work. That man o' mine, if I stay me but to pass the time o' day to a neighbour, he's always after me; and he takes hold on you as if you were a load o' bricks—you've got to go."

"Very like he's wanting me in the shop," said Agnes, when she could slide a word in.

* She would repent of it.

“Ah! then I’d best not tarry, or you’ll be wishing me further belike. Eh, we never have a bit o’ peace, we women. You know the old saw—

‘Weal and women cannot pan,*
But woe and women can.’

I’m sure—Are you wanting your mistress, Master Clervis? That’s second time you’ve looked in. Trust me, I’ll be gone. I’m right hearty beholden to you. Good morrow!”

* Unite, agree.





CHAPTER IX

THE SHADOW CAST BEFORE

EIGHT shillings the pound, Master Clervis; sure, now, none shall give so much as that for cloves nor canel?"

"Many, my mistress, I do ensure you," answered Ralph, weighing in his hand some sticks of cinnamon, then known as canel; "but that, look you, is principal. I have right good canel at six shillings the pound, and cloves low as five: should that serve your turn the better?"

"Nay, neither of 'em shall serve my turn; I gobble not silver down my throat o' that fashion. I must make account with somewhat better cheap than so. What be maces by the pound?"

"Six to eight shillings."

"Then I go not about to buy 'em. Nutmegs? Ginger?—What be they?"

"Nutmegs, three shillings; ginger, half-a-crown to four shillings."

"Nay, none of them's for me. I reckon I must be content with fennel seed."

"And a sight better for you, trust me," said Mrs. Staniford, who was waiting to be served, "than all them far fet' spices. Dear heart! cannot English folks be content with that is grown in their own land, but they must needs gape for seeds and leaves to be fetched 'em from Araby and the Indies? I make no count o' such rubbish, I can tell you. I'm well pleased with my own country, and so I'd counsel you to be, Mistress Ettys."

"I could be well apaid, Mistress Staniford, but our young folks love a bit of spice, look you."

"Ay, and if my young folks did so, I'd give 'em spice enough, I warrant you! but it'd be English grown, at the end of a good cudgel. Young folks, forsooth! You'll not catch me giving in to every conceit of every companion. They'll tarry for John Long, the carrier, that look for that."

This was a proverbial expression equivalent to

waiting a long while, while to send by that gentleman implied that the event would never take place. Mr. Long's dilatory proceedings must have made a strong impression upon somebody, before his name could have pointed morals in this manner.

Mrs. Ettys paid for her fennel seed, and departed with a general "Good morrow."

"And now, what for you, Mistress Staniford?" asked Ralph, brushing a few scattered seeds from the counter.

"A box of treacle, an't like you, Master Clervis, and a dozen of rubbing-brushes. Good lack, but what a shiftless woman is Meg Ettys! If I were Will, I'd carry her to Battersea to be cut for the simples.* Now pray you, Master Clervis, lose no time, for I have but Scarborough leisure† this morrow; I look for my mother-by-the-law to come in for four hours."‡

As Ralph returned from the back of the shop, whither he had been to fetch the box of treacle, a woman entered it with a slow step, who wore her hood well pulled forward, as though she wished not to be recognised. She did not approach the

* A proverb implying want of sense.

† None or little.

‡ The light afternoon meal at 4 P.M.

counter, but with a nod of greeting to Ralph passed at once into the passage behind, which implied that she came as a visitor to Agnes.

"Who's she?" demanded Mrs. Staniford, whose tongue was never still for long together.

"I saw not her face rightly," answered Ralph evasively. He had, however, seen enough to guess who the visitor was, and also to discover that in her expression which told him that to subject her to Mrs. Staniford's inconsiderate curiosity would not be a charitable action.

"Dear heart! I would I'd caught her! I've ten minds to go forward and pass the time to Mistress Clervis, but only to see who it is yonder. What say you, Master Clervis?—should it incommode her, or no?"

"Methinks, mistress, it should please her better, if it stood with your conveniency, to receive a visit from you at a time when she should be at more leisure to make you welcome, in especial if your own leisure serve not," said Ralph, in politic wise, being tolerably certain that Agnes would not at that moment feel thankful for an incursion of her inquisitive neighbour.

"Well, for sure, I'm pestered enough for time," answered Mrs. Staniford, taking up her brushes.

"I could run in with these and set the maids a-work, but there's the fritters, and that dizard Appolline's as safe to let 'em burn as she is to wear her earrings o' Sunday. I reckon I'd best not. Well, good morrow, Mistress Clervis 'll show me who it were, belike next time I visit her."

Ralph was glad to hear that she had best not trouble Agnes at that juncture, and equally pleased to see her depart. Having considerable surmise that something unpleasant had happened, or was about to do so, he quickly satisfied the demands of his next customer for a three-halfpenny gallon of verjuice, and the shop being then left empty he ran into the parlour to satisfy himself on that question.

A few minutes before, Agnes, who was sewing and singing in the parlour, had risen on the entrance of her visitor, with a troubled cry of "Meg! My dear heart, what aileth thee?"

What had happened to bright little Mrs. Rose? It was not often that she looked even serious. Generally, she was like a song-bird, flitting from branch to branch, and twittering as it went with cheery chirp, now and then breaking out into full tide of melody. To see her eyes red and

swollen with weeping, and her voice scarcely intelligible from painful emotion, was one of the strangest of sights to Agnes Clervaux.

"Meg, my dear heart, what aileth thee? Is Father Rose took sick?"

A shake of Mrs. Rose's head negatived the query.

"O Agnes! *O ma sœur!*" she gasped forth, with sobs between every few words. The law—it is passed—the dreadful law! You know? The Six Articles. They will part us! *C'est terrible, amica mia!* I have wept all night. I must weep all day. He is all I have, and they will part us. He say me, I go back to my country, I shall be more happier there. The better days may come: I return. Before, I go find my brother, my sisters; I dwell with them, till the better days. *Comment donc!* can I leave him alone? Can I be happy, I, and he by himself, nobody to help him, to keep him company, to nurse him if he be sick: I can be happy? No wife for him! and for me no home, no husband? You say that religion?" cried poor Mrs. Rose, becoming incoherent in her distress. "That to please God—to part the husband and the wife, and make both of them miserable? He say that in the Ten Commandments!"

“My poor, dear heart!” said Agnes tenderly, making her friend sit down, and untying the hood under which the fair Flemish plaits had been pushed back in disorder, so different from the customary delicate neatness characteristic of Marguerite Rose. “I am right grieved for thy trouble, I do ensure thee. But in truth I know not what it signifieth. I have heard of no law to such dread purpose. Prithee, tell me, what is it that hath been done?”

“You have not heard?” responded Mrs. Rose, a little calmed by the relief of pouring out her sorrow and indignation. “*Ma chérie*, it is now done—yesterday, this law *méchante* was pass the Parliament. All priests must part their wives by a day fix—it is very near. And if they be found again once together—only to speak one word, to take the hand, to say the ones to the others, Fare you well!—if they be found, the husband shall die! Not the wife: she shall live—she shall know, though ten, twenty, fifty years, it has killed him, that he should say one word of love and comfort to her. To slay her, it is not bad enough to please them. She must suffer more. And this is religion! This is for please God! God told them so? Never! Who make this law? Your King?

I believe not, I. The Devil make it. He sit and laugh to see the break-heart of it. *Dieu, est-Tu là?*—they do this in Thy name!”

“Is it verily passed, then?” said Ralph’s voice at the door. “I heard of it yestre’en, but I hoped it were too ill for truth.”

Mrs. Rose turned to him with an air of relief. To her French Huguenot friend, she could pour forth her feelings volubly in his own tongue, to her far more familiar than English. She could scarcely be said to possess a native language herself; she had rather several native languages, for her Flemish father and Spanish mother had habitually spoken to her in three—Flemish, Spanish, and French. It was a relief, therefore, to talk to Ralph Clervaux, which she experienced with no other English acquaintance.

“Yesterday, Monsieur, this horrible Act passed in the English Parliament. It is not yet sceptred; that is to be in June, and it comes not into force till the twelfth of July. What are your people doing, that they sit silent, and do not besiege the Throne against this wicked Act? The King could refuse to pass it, could he not?”

“Certainly, Madame,” answered Ralph; “but there is little likelihood of that. I was told yesterday,

that the King himself had taken great pains with this statute, and spent much labour on the framing of it."

"And he expects to please God with such wickedness as this?" cried Mrs. Rose.

"Ah, Madame," answered Ralph, "when a man once steps from the safe rock of God's Word into the boundless ocean of men's fancies, it is utterly impossible to say on what shore he will land. It is rarely, if I mistake not, the shore that he proposed when he launched his vessel."

"But God—doth He not see it? And He sits silent!"

"He sits silent, because He has infinite patience; because He yearns over the erring souls; because He knows how to sanctify the suffering to His children, and to bring them safe through it, and beyond it, to the haven where they would be."

"What, Monsieur! You think this is to do me good?—I am to be sanctified by it? I tell you, I have not felt so wicked these five years past. All the bad things in my heart come to the top, and make me so bad, I have no words to say it. You call that sanctification? I know not, I, what you mean."

"It is often the case, I think, Madame, that

medicine makes a patient feel worse before he feels better. It is to get rid of the corruptions that they are stirred up. 'All things work together for good to them that love God—to them that are the called according to His purpose.' *All things, Madame.* And 'all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth to them that keep His covenant and His testimonies.' *All the paths, Madame Rose.* The Lord is not concerned that you should be happy and at ease (though He doth not willingly afflict) half so much as He is concerned that you should be holy and without blemish."

"Ah! That is too high up for me. It will do for my husband. He is nearly as good as he can be—not quite, because now he will be quiet when I want to stir him up, and other times he insists on going into danger when there is no need. But I am bad—bad, Monsieur! I cannot be quiet. I could beat them every one that helped to make this Act, and I could enjoy it, and feel better when I had done it. That is a blemish, I suppose?"

"I fear it is, Madame," said Ralph, with a grave smile.

"Then do you not see that I am bad, and that the sorrow does me no good, but only makes me worse?"

"May it not be, dear friend, that the Lord wishes you to see it?"

"I can see nothing but my own misery," she said, with a sob.

"Not yet," replied Ralph gently. "When the medicine has done its work—when the pride is lowered, and the will softened, and the heart brought in tune to God's purpose—then, it may be, you will look back, Madame, over the wilderness way that He has led you and see that it is good for you to have been afflicted."

"Master!" said a little voice at the door, "Mistress Castle would have a gallon of vinegar, and both the 'prentices be forth of errands, and she'll not have me serve her."

"I come, Tom; it were better not till thou art older."

"*Et bien!*" sighed Mrs. Rose, when he had disappeared. "It must that I return. My husband will think I am lost. And I have trouble you long enough."

"Dear heart, 'tis no trouble," replied Agnes affectionately, "save that I am sore sorry for thy trouble. If it serve the very least to thy relief, I pray thee come to me and pour out thy sorrows. 'Tis surely the least a true friend can do to suffer with thee."

“Oh, Agnes, thou art the only comfort I have! It has me a little good done, the pour out. I am not quite as wicked as when I come in. I could have tear all the world in pieces. Now, I only want to shut up in the prison the people that do this, so they do no more mischief. That is better, *n'est-ce pas?*”

Agnes could not keep from smiling as she agreed to this. She kissed her friend affectionately as they parted. Agnes was very fond of Mrs. Rose, whose transparent honesty and simple truth were rare qualities, and more than redeemed the childish lack of sobriety which she was likely to outgrow all the sooner for the sorrows which had come upon her.





CHAPTER X

THE BLOODY STATUTE

WHEN Ralph came into the parlour after shutting up the shop, and Tom had just been put to bed, there was an evening hour, the pleasantest of the day, during which they could speak freely to each other. Agnes knew that he and William Ettys had held a whispered conversation in the passage, and she thought that Ralph looked graver than his wont. It was not her custom to keep silence concerning possible future troubles; she preferred to take the bull by the horns, and know the worst at once. So after Ralph had sat for a few minutes by the fireside without telling her anything, Agnes plunged at once into the question which was occupying the minds of both.

"Ralph, hast thou heard aught of the inwards of this new Act whereof Mistress Rose is so feared?"

"Somewhat, Annis," said Ralph, gently but curtly.

"It hath nought that shall touch thee and me, trow?"

"If thou and I be faithful to God's truth, Annis, it shall not leave us scatheless."

"O Ralph! how so?"

"All who deny the body of God to be in the sacrament in flesh and blood, really and essentially, are to be accounted traitors and heretics, and to be punished as such."

"'All who deny'—why, Ralph, they must needs hang and burn half the kingdom!"

"Sayest thou so, good wife? I reckon the charge for halters shall come easily out of the parish chest."

"Nay, surely! Do but think how many have learned the truth these years past, not to speak of such as knew it aforetime."

"How many thus learned shall keep it, reckonest thou, when the cost is loss of life or liberty?"

"Oh, I may well conceive a few of the careless shall fall away. There be hypocrites at all times, and thoughtless professors to boot. But thou

lookest not, surely, to see any great number thus use themselves?"

"I look to see one stand fast here, and another there: no more, Annis. Ay, and they that so do, forsooth, shall not be they that thou and I should pick out as most like to endure."

"Oh, Ralph, Ralph! I cannot believe it."

"Thou shalt see how it shall be."

"Now do but tell me who thou shouldst choose out as most like. I would say, Master Ettys and Meg, Master Newell, and Father Wisdom, that preacheth at Paul's Cross, should stand as firm as any. I am not so sure of Mistress Castle. Mistress Ambsworth, I hope—I know not. What sayest?"

"I say, Annis, that it were a vain thing to judge, and I would liefer speak of none. Only, with old Master Hasilbury, this will I say: they whom the Lord upholdeth shall stand firm, and they whom He leaveth to their own strength shall speedily fall away."

"Ay, so doubtless," said Agnes slowly, with an intonation which implied that she was not quite free from doubt on some point. "I marvel if Beysilla Staniford shall hold out. She alway beareth a good brag."

"I would she were a little less sure of herself,

said Ralph. "But truly, wife, the one question that concerneth thee and me is, how shall Ralph and Annis Clervaux stand?"

"Ralph, I would not love to be burned nor hanged; and yet lesser to see thee thus served."

"Truly, dear heart, and I the like. But there is one thing I should dread yet worsen, and that were to grieve the heart of the Lord that died for me. It were a thousandfold the lighter to bear the bodily disease of the one than the endless remorse of the other."

"Yet, Ralph, the Lord knoweth our hearts. We mean not to dishonour Him, but only to save ourselves. If it were a less matter—but surely for very life——"

"Bid him that is whispering that to thee get him behind thee, Annis. Life is less than nothing, and vanity, if it come to be weighed with the Lord's honour. Who be we poor worms that we should consider ourselves before Him?"

"May God forgive me if I so did!" said Agnes humbly. "In very deed, my words were iller than my thought. But, Ralph, dost think thou could'st bear it—here, to-night?"

"To-night?—no. I am not called to it to-night. When I am, the Lord will see that I have grace

therefor, if I beseech it of Him. We must live very near Him, Annis, in the time coming, and see to it that we walk very close with Him. They that be in danger are they that walk so far off, that temptation clutcheth hold of them afore they can reach Him."

The Six Articles were not allowed to pass without one protest. Thomas Broke, the Protestant Member for Calais, stood up in the House of Commons, and single-handed fought the Roman lion. He was overborne—talked and laughed down. On the 28th of June the Act received the royal assent. What the people at large thought of it was plain from the names they gave it—"The Whip with Six Strings," and "The Bloody Statute." The inconsistent course of the authorities, however, went on; the King forbade the printing of English Bibles without licence, pardoned Anabaptists and Sacramentarians, burned the bones of Becket, married a Protestant Princess, and hanged three abbots for denying the royal supremacy.

It was just growing dark on an evening at the end of June, when Mrs. Rose entered the grocer's shop, and rapped at the parlour door.

"Enter!" said Agnes's voice. "Ah, friend, is it thou? Dost bring good news or bad?"

A quick, expressive gesture intimated that the query was not easy to answer.

"*Hélas*, what know I?" answered Mrs. Rose, as she kissed her friend. "It is good, it is bad. There is the one and the other; and which of both two outweigh the other I know not, I."

"Do you go abroad at this time?"

"I go. That is evil. He go also—that is good. He go because the Duke of Norfolk make search for him—that is evil again."

"He is willing to go, then?"

"Willing? No. He is not willing. He is hard to drive as one pig. He care for me, he care for the truth, he care for the Lord; but he care not for Thomas Rose, not one bit. The Duke, that is now in some authority—I know not what, nor I trouble me not no more—he has heard that my husband preach against confession, against the mass, against all the bad things these others do; and he beset all the havens to catch him. He order that whoso shall find the said Thomas Rose shall him hang on the nearest tree. That is good news? No."

"Surely, dear heart, it is very ill news, and I am right sorry therefor. It shall be very needful that Father Rose get him away at the first chance he may."

"Have I not told him so the hundred time? For long time I may as well talk to the pot at fire. He will not go—No, they shall hang him ten times over. *Ma foi!* but one time should be plenty, and too much for me. Well! the hundred and one time, when my tongue is worn out with talking, he say, We go. But we come back quick, quick—the next day, if we could. What for we come back to be hung? My tongue she stick to my *palais*—I can no more. I come to you. I beg Monsieur Clervaux to go and talk to this pig-man, to tell him he shall go and not come back till it is safe. It desolate me to hear him!"

"I will entreat Ralph to go at once. But after all said, you do go?"

"We go—to-morrow night—for a little quarter of an hour. I know not, I, if I can keep him on the other side any longer. The perversity of the men, it is *affreux!* They have no reason, those others, not one morsel."

Agnes despatched her husband on his errand, and went back to Mrs. Rose.

"Is all made ready, dear heart? or may I be of any service to thee?"

"All is ready, I thank thee, *hermana*, except this man, that shall never be ready. At the least,

not for to make him safe. Tell him the bad Duke would hear him preach, and send him to hang when he had finished, and he is ready that minute. He would go without his cloak, unless that I rush at him and put it on his shoulders. But when it is to flee, to be made safe, to keep him safe when he is saved—no, he will not stir no more. I tell you, he is one pig.”

Agnes laughed and then sighed. She was sorry to lose her friends, and she was more than a little apprehensive as to the future, both for herself and Ralph.

“What for thou sighest, *ma chérie*?”

“It is dark,” replied Agnes sadly. “How and when shall we meet again?”

“Ah, for that let us trust the good God.”

“Truly, we should trust Him for all, going and coming both. Yet, perchance, Meg, ’tis easier at this moment for thee than me. Thou goest into the light, but thou leavest me in the darkness.”

“*Bon!* Is it not in the dark that you trust? In the light you see. To trust only where one can see, that is little. It is what you call shabby—*n’est ce pas?* That honour the good Lord? No, not at all. Then, if we trust Him not in the dark, when the light come we shame.”

"Ah, Meg, 'tis easier for us both to preach than to practise. Dost not see thou shouldst trust that the good Lord shall keep Father Rose safe, and not suffer him to return afore the right time?"

"*Ma chère*, do I not trust Him? The good Lord arrange all for us—He bring us the boat wherein we voyage. The story is too long to tell. But if this man will not take the Lord's provisions, but go and drown himself, or beg the Duke of Norfolk to hang him, can I trust that the Lord shall work a miracle that the Duke shall hang him not?"

Agnes was silenced. She felt that there was some reason in Mrs. Rose's argument. They sat quietly till Ralph came in.

"Well, Madame Rose," he said cheerfully, "I count you shall find your husband convinced when you reach home. He hath promised me that he will not adventure him to return until he reckon it safe."

Mrs. Rose gave a little shake of her head, which did not exactly imply the absence of apprehension.

"What, shall that not serve your turn?" added Ralph, with a smile.

“Monsieur Clervaux, you say, ‘till he reckon it safe.’ Had you say, ‘till you reckon it safe’—that is me—I could go to sleep. But *he* reckon it safe if the road were lined with snares and swords and guns, if only he think he ought to go. *Et bien !* I must trust the good Lord, all I can. I thank you for your good service. But I do pray you both to beg the good Lord that He will keep him safe—for I you assure, it is the one thing he will not keep himself.”

“You may trust us for that, Madame Rose, and God too. Are not the beloved of the Lord always safe? and if it please the Lord that Father Rose lose this earthly life—as I do earnestly hope shall not be—yet can you not trust Him to bring him to His holy hill and to His tabernacle?”

“*Mais oui !* I can trust God to take him at heaven; but I, I want him here at earth. Monsieur Clervaux, I am a woman, and I am very earthly. I am not an angel, no more. I want my husband here, because I am here. When I come at heaven I shall want him there; but now—no!”

“Yet if the good Lord lack him there, Madame?”

“Monsieur, you would have me to say, Very well; let the good Lord have His way and not me have mine. *Et bien !* If I were an angel,

that should I say. But I am a woman, and I cannot. There is one piece of me say that it is right. But the other half of me up it fly and say, No! I want my way. I want my husband—not *là haut*—down here. You tell me what I do? This is me, that is me, both are me. I am tear in two pieces.”

And poor Mrs. Rose's voice choked.

“Madame,” said Ralph very softly, “the Lord made you a woman; He took His flesh of a woman only, and surely He knoweth a woman's heart. I beseech you, take your two wills to Him, and beg of Him to make them one with His will. It may be that He who asked in His agony, that if it were possible the cup should pass from Him, may make it pass from you. If it be not possible, perchance He will send an angel to strengthen you. But in any case, I pray you, refuse not the cup, for bitter though the first taste may be, the medicine is needful, and the after flavour shall be sweet.”

“You, you have found it thus?” she asked wistfully, looking up into Ralph's face with child-like eyes.

“I have found it so,” he answered, but his voice trembled a little.

"I will try. You are a good man, Monsieur. God bless you both, my good friends."

"And may He bless thee, dear Meg, and send us an happy meeting when and where He seeth best," said Agnes affectionately, as she took leave of her friend.





CHAPTER XI

THROUGH THE STORM

THE grocer's shop was closed on the following evening half-an-hour earlier than was its wont. It excited no surprise that this should be the case. Commercial life then was a slower and quieter affair than it is now; men made less haste to be rich, and did not consider that convenience and pleasure and health, and even principle, must give way to business, as the highest good and the first point to be considered. To that age belongs the quaint and comfortable proverb, of the truth of which many in the present day lose sight, "A pennyworth of ease is worth a penny." They took far more holidays than we, and spent them in much less exciting and unwholesome ways—except in some cases, such as

tournaments and bull-baiting, wherein we have certainly improved upon the manners of the olden time.

Ralph went out as soon as the shop was shut and it was late before he returned. Agnes had waited for him in the parlour with an amount of impatience unusual in her, which to a spectator might have betrayed anxiety. But there was no spectator to whom to betray it, for she had sent Tom to bed. Ralph had given the apprentices leave to be out for the evening, and Jennet, the maid, was in the kitchen. When at last Ralph's step was heard in the passage, Agnes went hastily to meet him, asking with her eyes a question which apparently she did not think it judicious to frame with her lips. A smile and nod from Ralph conveyed an evident affirmative, and seemed to set Agnes's mind at rest.

His wet cloak taken off to dry in the kitchen, for the evening was rainy, Ralph came into the parlour, whither Agnes followed as soon as she was able, shutting the door behind her.

"Now, Ralph, tell me all about it."

"There is little to tell, sweeting, save that they be off, safe and well, and I trust all shall go accordingly. Father Rose bade me give thee his blessing,

and Mistress Rose would have her commended right lovingly unto thee."

"Seemed she at all more content than afore-time?"

"Ay, so I think; and, without I err, he also is something more willing to tarry till matters be safe."

"That is good hearing," said Agnes. "And the boatmen—be they true men, thinkest?"

"I would say so. They be father and son—Gospellers both, that dwell at Erith; and the father did me to wit that if he landed not Father Rose and his mistress safe ashore his own life should be forfeit."

"Well, I am glad," said Agnes, though her tone was not glad by any means, for she was struggling with that mournful feeling of having lost something out of life which is the portion of those who stay behind. "'Tis sad, nevertheless, for us Gospellers that shall lose his holy counsel. There is but Father Wisdom and Father Hardyman left now."

The Rev. Robert Wisdom was parish priest of St. Margaret, Lothbury, and the Rev. John Hardyman was vicar of St. Martin, Ironmonger Lane. Both were fervid Gospellers, and both inveighed

in scathing words against the corruptions of Popery. The former had lately been preaching a course of sermons at St. Paul's Cross, whereby he had rendered himself obnoxious to those in authority.

"Each is an host in himself," said Ralph. "And by the same token, Annis, I did foregather with Father Wisdom as I came home, and heard from him of a thing wherein thou art nearly concerned."

"Why, Ralph, whatso?"

"Father Wisdom is at this present seeking some small lodging wherein he may bestow some part of his library, the which overrunneth his present banks, and where also he might by times repose and refresh himself, if the owner thereof would find him in diet for awhile. 'There be causes in these days,' quoth he, 'wherefore it were wiser for a mouse to have more than one hole.' Wherefore——"

"Oh, Ralph, our porch-chamber!" cried Agnes, unable longer to repress herself.

"The very thing he desireth, dear heart. He would fain, saith he, find lodgment in our house, if it stood with thy conveniency, and if we were not afeared to take him. I made answer to that, 'The risk shall be mine, and I will run it gladly; but the

toil being my wife's, 'tis but fair that she have the refusing thereof, if she account it more than her hands may carry.' So, Annis, the matter rests with thee."

"I shall be willing and glad, Ralph. How wilt give the Father to wit?"

"He preacheth at Shurson's as to-morrow night, and I engaged me to meet him there with thine answer."

"Then tell him, prithee, that if it please him to tarry three clear days from now I will be full ready for him when the fourth dawneth."

"Thou art well assured it shall not be overmuch labour for thee?"

"Well assured," said Agnes, with a smile.

On the fourth day Mr. Wisdom presented himself accompanied by a handcart bearing a goodly pile of folios. Agnes was ready for him. The day was spent in arranging the volumes on the shelves which Ralph had put up for them on three sides of the room—an occupation wherein Tom wrought manfully and took great delight. It was supper-time when all was finished, and Mr. Wisdom accepted Ralph's invitation to remain for that meal, which consisted this evening of a squirrel pie, an almond pudding, and curds and whey.

"Have you heard the news touching Dr. Latimer?" asked Mr. Wisdom, as they sat at supper.

"Nay. We heard he was to set forth, but no more. Went he or no?"

"He went, but was stayed at Gravesend by the King's command, for what cause I heard not."

"Lack-a-day! I trust Father Rose shall not be stayed in like manner!" exclaimed Agnes, in much concern for her friends.

"Take your heart to you, Mistress Clervis; I trust there is no cause to fear. I am glad he is gone; I did mine utmost to persuade him thereto. I am only afeared lest he turn again ere it be wise so to do. There be men that cannot be brought to adventure them into danger, and there be that be to the full as ill to make tarry thereout. If I err not, our friend Rose is of the latter company."

"They are but a scant assemblage," said Ralph. "Be you of them that look for the storm to break, Father, or of them which reckon that the worst is o'er, and the clouds shall now roll away?"

"They may roll away for a while," replied Mr. Wisdom, a little doubtfully; "but methinks we have not yet come to the end of the storm. I misdoubt rather if we have seen the heaviest portion thereof."

“That think I likewise. And who shall abide the day of God’s sifting?”

For some time matters went on quietly in the grocer’s shop in Gracechurch Street. Every now and then a step in advance was taken by those in power, which made the hearts of the Gospellers beat high with hope; and soon afterwards followed one or more retrograde steps, which caused sore disheartenment. In the April of 1840 a certain priest, a *persona grata* at Court, whom the King had previously employed on embassies, was promoted to the See of London; but no one knew at that date much of Edmund Bonner, or guessed how fearfully familiar his name was to become fifteen years thereafter. A quest for heretics, about the same time, resulted in the burning of sundry hapless Anabaptists—a set of misguided fanatics who had nothing in common with modern Baptists beyond their views on infant baptism and immersion. The Protestant Queen, Anna of Cleve, was dismissed six months after marriage, her only faults being a lack of wit and beauty; and the once all-powerful minister, Thomas Cromwell, fell with her. Three prominent Gospellers, Dr. Barnes, Mr. Garnet, and Mr. Jerome, were burned on the same day. One forward step was taken in the following May, when the “Great

Bible" was set up in the churches. Abroad the Protestants were gradually parting into the two divisions of Lutherans and Calvinists, and Ignatius Loyola was founding the Society of Jesuits.

There were no special clouds visible on the religious or political horizon, more than had been the case for many months, when one spring evening about that time William Ettys, the girdler, applied for admission to the house of his friend, Ralph Clervaux. He was let in by Tom, and passed into the parlour, where Ralph, Agnes, and Mr. Wisdom were sitting calmly after closing time and supper. The priest was reading, Agnes busy with needlework, and Ralph had been helping Tom to manufacture a box.

"God give you good den, friends!" said Ettys, looking round. "Have you any fantasy of what I come to tell you?"

"Ill news, Will? Thy face spells not good tidings."

"It were scanty like, Ralph, when I have been told but an hour back that the Philistines be upon us."

"After what manner?"

"A search for heretics: and I hear that all we be like to share therein."

“Who brings the news?”

“Christopher.”

“Lord, have mercy upon us!” It was Agnes who spoke, but the faces of all three went a shade whiter when they heard the source whence that news came. Christopher was the assistant gaoler at Newgate, a secret friend of the Gospellers, and not at all likely to be deceived in respect of his information.

“Amen!” said Mr. Wisdom gravely, and Ralph echoed it.

“Father Wisdom, you had been better to take the advisement of your friends, and set forth a twelvemonth gone.”

“Nay, Master Ettys, I think not so. I am ready to follow my Master.”

“How far?” answered Ettys solemnly. “There be many will sing hymns with Him in the upper chamber that shall find the walk too long across the Kedron to Gethsemane; many that think they could go with Him both into prison and to death, that shall flee any way they may when the officers of the chief priests be visible through the trees of the garden.”

“Shame befall them that so do!” indignantly cried Mr. Wisdom. “Surely, Ettys, you have more manhood than so?”

"Father, I dare not say I have any at all, save what my Master shall give me when the hour cometh. 'Tis not often, methinks, that He giveth it the hour before."

"Will Ettys, I had never thought you so white-livered!"

"I am afeared I had," was the meek answer. "Howbeit, let that pass. Can I be of any service to you, Father? Should it be to your conveniency to hide you any whither?"

"I will hide me no whither! I am not such a recreant."

"Then God do His will with us all!" said Ettys.

That night Agnes herself put Tom to bed. It was often her maid Jennet, and lately Tom had frequently been trusted to attend to himself. The transaction was performed almost in silence; but when Tom had lain down, and drawn the scarlet coverlet over him, he said—

"Mistress, doth your head ache?"

"No, Tom. Wherefore dost thou ask it?"

"You look so solemn, mistress, and you scanty speak."

"Tom, I would have thee listen to me, and bear in mind what I now say to thee. If it

should hap that the catchpoll come, and take away me and thy master, thou must then mind Jennet in place of us. Be a good lad till we return, and give her no cause of displeasure. Canst thou so do?"

"The catchpoll!" repeated Tom in a tone of amazement.

"Ay, or the Sheriff. I wis not which of both twain."

"What'll he come for?" inquired Tom, in the same tone.

"Not for any evil that we have done, Tom. We shall suffer—if God will us to suffer—for the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ."

"Will they put you in the lions' den, mistress?"

The story of Daniel in the lions' den was a great favourite with Tom.

"Nay, I think not so," said Agnes, with a grave smile.

"Or into the burning fiery furnace?"

"That were more like, may be," she answered, with a shudder, which she was not able to repress.

"I know not, my child. Only they shall do unto us no more than God shall grant them leave."

"Oh!" Tom's voice indicated that those words

were a great relief to his feelings. "Then, mistress, what must I do while you be hence?"

"Thou must rise at four of the clock, Tom, and dress thee neatly, and if aught lack amending in thy clothes, carry it to Jennet, and ask her to amend it for thee. Thou mayest run in the garden after breakfast an half-hour with Clover, but look thou heed the clock of St. Denis when it chimeth seven, and scan thy lessons afore, that thou be ready for school. After dinner, till it be school-hours again, thou canst see if Jennet have any little matter thou canst do. Learn thy lessons well for the next day, and hie thee to bed when the clock goeth six."

"I'll do it!" said Tom, with a long breath which showed that he realised the magnitude of his undertaking. "Mistress, you'll not tarry away longer than you can help? We shall miss you sore, me and Clover."

Agnes stooped and kissed him.

"Trust me, Tom, we shall be right glad to come back, if it be the Lord's will. But if we be long away, or howso it be, I bid thee bear in mind one passage of God's Word—that thou didst learn and repeat to me, last Sunday was a se'nnight—'I have set the Lord always before me; He is at my right

hand, therefore I shall not be moved.' Whatsoever thou dost, all thy life long, do it as if the Lord stood at thy right hand a-watching thee, not in anger, but in love; ready to lead thee and help thee, but always there—and do nought thou wouldst not have Him to see thee do. Wilt bear it in mind, Tom?"

"I will, mistress," said Tom simply, but soberly.

"God grant thee grace so to do!" replied Agnes, laying her hand on the boy's head. "God bless thee, my little lad, and keep thee in all thy ways, and in His way, which is righteousness and truth."

And suddenly, with her hand still on the fair curls, she lifted up her eyes and heart to God.

"Lord, keep Tom true!"





CHAPTER XII

THE LORD'S PRISONERS

THERE was a quiet and silent breakfast the next morning, for it was even more uncertain than usual what the day might bring forth. Agnes despatched Tom to school with an unspoken wonder, when, or if, she should see him again. She had not recognised until then that her little waif was becoming almost as dear to her heart as those four lost darlings who lay under the churchyard grass. From the parlour window she could see the boy cross the yard, and pass in at the door of the school attached to the Church of St. Denis. She stood to watch him till he was out of sight.

“Lord, Thou dost well that Thou dost !” she murmured, with lips that quivered as she spoke.



H. 21.

"May we know, Master Sheriff, of what offence we be arrest?"—Page 136

"It had been wellnigh too hard for flesh and blood, if Thou hadst called me to leave *them*."

She had not turned from the window, when Jennet ran in with a white, startled face.

"The blessed saints be about us! Mistress, here is an whole sort o' folks in the shop, and Master Sheriff to boot, and they make inquisition for you and master."

Agnes was ready for them.

"So be it!" she said quietly. "Jennet, have here my keys, such as I need leave with thee. In the brown leather box bound with iron, in my chamber, thou wilt find money that shall carry thee on a while, to bear the charges of the house and of Tom's finding to school. Thou must able thyself after thy power to keep all things going well, and rule thyself and the child according to right. May be we shall be back ere long; if not so, do thy best, and pray God to guide thee."

Jennet, a good-natured, thoughtless girl, began to cry.

"Agnes, the Sheriff is here," said Ralph's quiet voice at the door.

"I am ready," she replied, calmly tying on her hood and coming forward. "May we know, Master

Sheriff, under your good allowing, of what offence we be arrest?"

"Of maintaining divers preachers of the new learning," replied the Sheriff rather gruffly.

Agnes bowed her head in silence. She did not say, though the thought thrilled through her, "Then we suffer because He was a stranger, and we took Him in."

Ropes were produced, and Ralph and Agnes were tied together before they were marched up to the Guildhall, where the Lord Mayor and other magistrates sat to receive them. In the street they found a string of other prisoners, amongst whom were William and Margaret Ettys, Mrs. Castle, Mrs. Ambsworth, Mr. Hasilbury, and two or three more whom they knew. Mr. Newell, Mrs. Bedike, and others were added as they passed along. At the vicarage of St. Margaret's, Lothbury, Mr. Wisdom was brought out, and Mr. Hardyman, vicar of St. Martin's, Ironmonger Lane, was added to the group a little later. So they arrived at the Guildhall, where they were untied, and put all together into a small room, where there was only room for the women to sit on the two benches which formed all the furniture it held. Half-an-hour passed quietly here. At the end of that time the door was opened,

and Mr. Smith and Mistress Staniford were thrust into the room.

"Good morrow, Master Smith!" said Mr. Wisdom. "Are we all here on the same charge, or on divers?"

"I am here for maintaining the preachers," replied Mr. Smith — "to wit, yourself, Friar Ward, and Thomas Rose."

"And I" — "And I" — said eight others, of whom Ralph Clervaux was one.

"I reckon that is wherefore we be here," added William Ettys, "but I was not careful to make inquiry."

"I am here," said the vicar of St. Martin's, "for saying in my sermons that confession is confusion, and denying the transubstantiation of the bread and wine of the Sacrament."

"And I for charges of the like nature," said two or three more.

"I am accused to be a great doctress,* and for teaching my maids; also to have no reverence for the Sacrament," replied Mrs. Ambsworth.

"Very like," responded Mr. Smith. "If you had been content with learning your maids to sing foolish

* The word *doctor* at this time always referred to a professor of divinity or science, and was never used of a doctor of medicine.

songs and dance round the Maypole, you should have been let be."

"Of a truth I know not wherefore I am in," said Mrs. Castle, "for I ne'er spake any harm of aught, that I know."

"I am in," quietly said Anne Bedike, "for turning away mine head at the sacring time." *

"Good lack! may a woman not turn her head?" cried Mrs. Castle. "Methinks their heads be turned that say so."

"I am arrest for refusing confession," said another.

"And I," said Mrs. Hasilbury, "on a charge of despising our Lady, the which I never did to my knowing."

"I bare not a palm on Palm Sunday," said an elderly woman; "this is all whereof I am accused." *

"Why, good lack! we are all in for nought!" exclaimed Mrs. Castle. "Methinks they might let us off for a tester the piece, and ha' done. Let's see—here be eight and twenty of us; they'd win fourteen shillings by it. I would I could make as much so easy."

"By the like means, my mistress?"

* These charges were really brought.

"Well, nay! I bear no ill-will to my neighbours."

The door opened, and the Sheriff's assistant appeared.

"Beysilla Staniford!" was all he said.

"What, shall I go the first?" answered Mrs. Staniford briskly. "Well, then, here am I. I'll set you all a brave ensample. I care not for third-boroughs and catchpolls, not I."

The Sheriff's assistant responded only by a silent grin of apparent derision as he shut the door after the exit of the prisoner. About twenty minutes passed in silence, and then the door reopened.

"William and Margaret Ettys!" was the next summons.

"Pray you, my master, what is done to Mistress Staniford?"

"Nought is done to her. She's gone home."

"Pardoned?" asked several voices, in a tone of surprise.

"Caved in like a puff-ball," was the curt reply, as the speaker shut the door. "You'd best follow."

"Nay, friend, that had we not!" answered Mr. Smith.

"Truly, I looked for none other," said old Mr. Hasilbury. "Her words were too brave to last. Pray God no more of us recant."

Mr. and Mrs. Ettys were longer under examination. When they did return they were handcuffed. Anne Bedike was next summoned.

"Committed to the Counter," said William Ettys, in answer to the many queries he received. "There is like to be little forbearance to any, friends, for my Lord Wriothsesley is himself upon the bench."

"Then God give us His grace!" said Ralph, just as the door opened again, and the names of "Ralph and Agnes Clervis!" echoed through the room.

"What is come of Mistress Bedike?" asked Ralph, as he and Agnes followed their guide.

"Put to fine," was the reply.

"Thank God she hath stood firm!"

"You're thankful for small mercies, friend."

"Nay, master, but for the first of all mercies after the sacrifice of Christ our Lord—the grace to be true to Him."

There was no time to say more, for the court was reached.

"Ralph Clervis, otherwise Clervaux, thou art

here indicted by the name of Ralph Clervis, for that thou didst harbour, maintain, and abet, in thy house called the 'Bell,' in Gracechurch Street, in the City of London, and elsewhere, divers preachers of the new learning, to wit Robert Wisdom, Thomas Rose, and Matthew Ward, after the same was rendered unlawful by the Act of the Six Articles, and the King's Majesty's proclamation concerning the same. How sayest thou? Art thou guilty or not guilty thereof?"

"Guilty, my lords."

"Dost thou repent this thy naughty action, and wilt thou set thine hand to a declaration setting forth the same?"

"With all respect to your lordships, and to the King's Majesty, whose high person you 'present, I do deny so to do."

"Away with your flummery of respect!" cried Wriothsesley, who never lost a chance of browbeating a Gospeller. "Wilt thou sign the paper or no, thou naughty rogue?"

"I will not sign it, my Lord."

"Let him be committed to the Counter," the Lord Mayor began to say; but Wriothsesley interrupted him with a harsh cry of, "The Fleet! the Fleet!"

"At your lordship's command," added the Lord Mayor quickly. "To the Fleet. Take him away, gaoler, and set Agnes Clervis at the bar."

The indictment—a repetition of her husband's—was read out, and Agnes was asked if she pleaded guilty.

"Ay, my lords! I can say none other."

"Will you sign the declaration, woman?"

"Nay, my lords; mine husband hath answered for me."

"To the Fleet with her likewise," exclaimed Wriothsesley.

As Agnes was led away she met the next prisoner coming to the bar—the vicar of St. Margaret's.

"God bless you!" said Mr. Wisdom, and passed on.

The rest of the prisoners were dealt with in their turn. All had held fast save the boaster, Beysilla Staniford; but not all were sentenced in like manner. Those who were considered but slight offenders, or who seemed timid, and possibly capable of being frightened into compliance for the future, were let off with a fine; the greater offenders were sent to prison. Not, as now, for a given term: in 1541, when a man was committed

to prison, he had no means of guessing, as he saw the door close behind him, whether it would open for his release in two days or in twenty years. When the trial was over it was found that of the twenty-eight accused, fifteen were fined more or less heavily. Among these there were Anne Bedike, Mrs. Castle, and Cicely Marshall, who had omitted to carry the palm. Those sent to the Counter, the easiest of all the prisons, were five in number, and included William and Margaret Ettys and Mr. Smith. Mrs. Ambsworth, Mrs. Hasilbury, and another, who had denied transubstantiation, went to the Fleet with Ralph and Agnes Clervaux. For Mr. Wisdom, Mr. Hardyman, and Mr. Newell, accounted the chief criminals, was reserved the heavier penalty of the Marshalsea.

They were all taken back to the little room, except those who chose to pay the fine at once, and who were then suffered to go free. Many were not able to do this.

"Why, to speak sooth, I never looked to be fined," said Mrs. Castle jovially. "I thought the King's Highness should be at the cost of lodging me these few weeks next ensuing, so I fetched hither no money in my pocket. I bade our

Polydore come hither toward even to see what should have chanced me, and I will send him for the money when he cometh. I can stand forty shillings, I guess, and not be much the poorer."

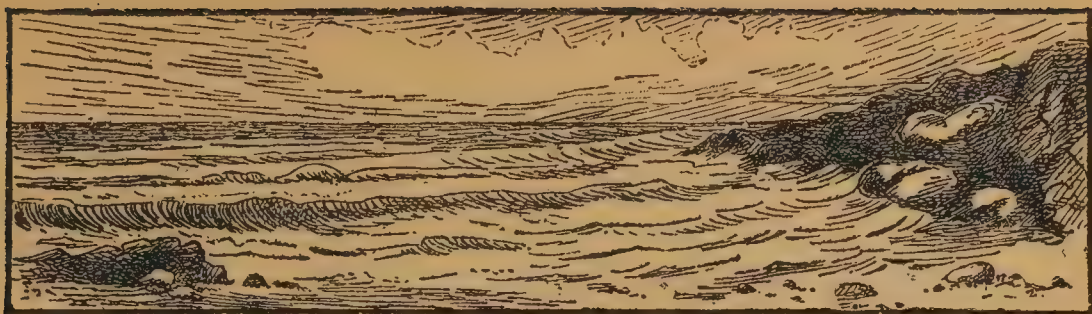
"Ay, you have cause to be thankful, Mistress Castle," said Mr. Newell. "We poor fools that be committed are a step lower than you."

"Say you so?" replied old Mr. Hasilbury. "Nay, Nick Newell, we be a step higher, for we share more nearly in the fellowship of our Lord's sufferings."

"Ay, you may crow, old cock," answered Mr. Newell humorously, "you are bound but for the Fleet. Would I were no worser!"


"Friend," was the answer, "I am willing to carry any end of Christ's cross, so that Christ Himself will take the other."





CHAPTER XIII

THOSE LEFT BEHIND

OE, I would thee and Miles didn't make such a cluther.* A body can scarce hear his own voice. Come now, one of you go into the back-out,† and fetch me in another chunk‡ for the fire. I'm all of a dather§ wi' work, this tedious day."

Joe, who was one of the two apprentices, grinned as he went into the yard for the log of wood, and, coming in with it, flung it down with unnecessary force upon the clean hearth which Jennet had just swept up.

"There you be!"

"There thou art, thou means, thou addle-pate! To cast a chunk o' thatn's down of a cleaned

* Noise.

† Backyard.

‡ Log of wood.

§ Tremble.

hearth!—and me that beazled* as never was! Couldst not cast it o' the fire? Them haggisters† o' lads, they queers me! Now then, whither away? Couldn't thou tarry and help a body?"

"Thou mayest do thine own work," said Joe sulkily. "A man lacks a bit o' play of an even, when shop's shut up."

"Marry guep! and not a woman, my dainty master? I've been a-work more hours than thou, for I heard thee snoring like an owl when I went down this morrow to light the fire. But thou'rt like all the rest—they think o' nought save theirselves. Tom, whither goest thou?"

"Abed," said Tom soberly.

"Why, clock's but now going six. I'd tarry a bit longer to-night, if I were thee," said Joe. "Thou's a chance now to lake,‡ when folks be away."

"Can't," came the short answer again.

"Wherefore?"

"I promised," said Tom, beginning to trudge upstairs.

"But there's nobody here to see."

* Fatigued.

† Magpies. Jennet speaks the dialect of West Kent.

‡ Play.

"I promised mistress," repeated the little boy.

"Why, thou dotipole!*—she cannot see thee."

"Thou mightest bide an hour, Tom. We'll none of us tell," added Jennet coaxingly.

"No," said Tom, answering Joe; "but God Almighty can."

"Well, whatso?" replied Joe, to whom reverence was an unknown sensation. "Dost reckon He'd thrash thee?"

"He wouldn't be well pleased," replied Tom, from half-way up the stairs; "and I shouldn't know how to say my prayers at after."

"Leave 'em be, then!" grinned Joe.

"I couldn't," said Tom gravely; "I'm God's child."

"Well, amn't I? I've been baptized, I guess."

"I don't know. If you be, you aren't like your Father."

With that acute remark Tom vanished into his attic.

He knelt down at once by the bed, and offered Agnes's prayer, which had made a deep impression on him: "Lord, keep Tom true!" He did not

* Simpleton.

even substitute "me" for his name. He had a secret feeling that the petition was too precious and too sacred to be altered even in a syllable. "God will know it is me," he said simply to himself; and every night, before his other prayers, he whispered, "Lord, keep Tom true!"

"Thou'st caught it now, Joe!" said Jennet, laughing, as soon as Tom had disappeared.

"The little knave! He shall hear of it one o' these days," observed Joe, making himself very comfortable in his master's chair, while Miles, who was of a more active disposition, was engaged in the interesting occupation of sprinkling pepper in the marmalade, and salting the candied fruits, for the benefit of the morrow's customers. "What's for supper this even, Jen?"

"Dishel, Joe."

This was a mixture of eggs with bread-crumbs, sage, and saffron.

"Give it them it liketh; that's not me."

"What wouldst?"

"Some'at better nor that. Where's the good of sending off the cats without the mice win a bit of cheese and cake thereby?"

"Well, we'd best not go too far, thou knowest; master may be let out to-morrow."

"Not he! Let's have a feast for once, Jen."

"But the money is none so much, Joe, as mistress left me; it shall scanty serve to eat tansy to thy 'leverer,* and have no means to buy bread for thy supper."

"Gramercy, Jen! We'll keep the shop open."

"How wist thou what disposition master may have made thereabout?"

"Somebody'd ha' been after afore now, an' he had."

"I'm not so sure o' that, Joe. I'd as lief not come in trouble, if I can keep out. Let's tarry another day or two, at the least."

"Dear heart, Jennet! thou'rt as nice † as a nun's hen."

"Nay, I love a feast as well as thou, but I'm none so fond of a fray at after. And if master come, or any man that he hath empowered, to-morrow or next day, it shall be holy-day at Peckham ‡ with us."

"Couldn't we face him out thinkest?"

"I'm doubtful," said Jennet. "I'll make you some rosee if you will, Joe; but I daren't go no further."

* Eleven o'clock luncheon.

† Particular.

‡ We shall be awkwardly situated.

Rosee was the name for dates boiled in milk and seasoned with spices.

"Pap for babes!" remarked Joe.

Jennet, however, set to work on the rosee, but she had to go into the shop for cinnamon; and happening to light on a parcel of that dainty which Master Miles had been improving by the addition of a considerable quantity of the inner bark of the ash-tree in the backyard, the flavour of the dish was rather impaired thereby.

"It tastes mortal queer!" she said, dropping her spoon.

"Why, there's no spice therein!" added Joe.

"There's some'at as isn't spice, or I mistake," said Jennet. "Has either of both twain of you been a-meddling therewith?"

"Sonties!" * cried Miles, throwing down his spoon. "Jennet, whence gattest thy spice?"

"I took the ginger from the drawer, and the canel from that parcel behind the saffron box."

"I'm a rogue if thou hast not meddled therein the parcel of ash-bark I strewed with canel for to-morrow!"

"Thou'rt a rogue if I have," said Jennet. "Howbeit, thou hast only that thou demeritest."

* Little saints.

"But I've ate ever such a lot!" exclaimed Miles, growing pale. "Good lack! can either of you tell if ash-bark be poison or no?"

"Oh, as evil as vitriol," said Joe, putting on a very grave face. "Thou wilt be jolly well acrazed,* without thou drink this instant moment a full quart o' wormwood, with grated aloes steeped therein. I've heard my grandmother tell no end thereof. I'll run now for the wormwood and aloes, if thou wilt have the fire a-ready, Jen. There's no time to lose."

Away went Joe, stopping to explode with laughter as soon as he considered himself out of hearing, while Miles sat with both arms on the table and his head upon them, groaning with the imaginary pain he supposed it proper that he should feel. Jennet, who was half-duped, though she knew enough of Joe's tricks not to put implicit faith in him, prepared to boil the nauseous dose which he had dictated. The medicine made and swallowed, Miles was put to bed by Joe with an assumption of the tenderest concern. About seven o'clock the next morning, when most people had been up two or three hours, Miles presented himself, asserting that he was still alive, but tormented by a plague

of a headache, and troubled with objectionable sensations in the region of the stomach.

"Are you sick?" inquired Tom, who was strapping up his books to start for school.

"Plaguy ill!" said Miles.

"Couldn't you take somewhat to make you better?"

"I've taken too much already," answered Miles grimly.

"Come, lad, thee be off to school," ordered Joe, following Tom into the street. "Hold thy peace, Tom; 'tis all a jest."

"Is Miles jesting?" asked Tom, opening his eyes.

"Nay, but I am. I've won him to think him poisoned, without he drank some bitter diet-drink; and 'tis that causeth him to feel diseaseful."

Tom's face lengthened considerably.

"Well, what now?" asked Joe, laughing.

"Good morrow, Joe. I'd best go quickly, or I might say some thing you deserved."

"Take that with thee, thou impudent smatchet!" replied Joe, aiming a resultless kick at Tom as he ran off.

As Joe turned to re-enter the "Bell," he found himself confronted by two elderly men, who desired

to know if that house and shop belonged to one Ralph Clervis. Joe acknowledged his master's name, with some misgiving as to the object of the inquiry. The gentlemen walked in without another word, and passed through the shop to the parlour.

"I ask your masterships' pardons, but who be you, an' it like you to tell me?" asked Joe, thinking it his best policy to be civil to the new-comers till he knew who they were.

"My name is Palmer, lad, and I am brother by the law to thy master," replied the younger but more dignified of the two. "Master Clervis writ me this letter as Wednesday last, wherein he prayed me to come over and make disposition for the carrying on of his business, should he be taken without chance to further the same. This gentleman with me is his attorney. Tell me, whom hath Master Clervis left in charge?"

"There's only Jennet Pulvercost, and me, Joseph Smalpage, and the other 'prentice, by name Miles Grinstead."

"Ah! It was time we came, Master Warren. Send this Jennet Pulvercost to me."

In another minute Jennet stood courtesying just within the parlour door.

"Come hither, Jennet Pulvercost," said Mr. Palmer. "Dost thou know this ring?"

"That do I well, master. 'Tis my master's signet, that he useth to wear of his finger."

"Very well. That will show thee, an' thou canst not read, that I am come with the authority of thy master."

"Ay, an't please you, my master," said Jennet, with another courtesy, and an inward mixture of relief and apprehension, the former predominating, for she had begun to be afraid that she might be the next victim of Joe's malicious tricks.

"I have been told that thy mistress left with thee certain moneys to keep house?"

"She did so; and under favour of your good mastership I can make you account thereof."

"All in good time, young woman," said the attorney.

"The persecution* of thy master's business now falleth to me," added Mr. Palmer. "I will send in, as to-morrow, a certain sober, honest man and his wife, who shall dwell in the house and see to all matters, and of whom, until my brother's return, ye are to make account as your master and mistress."

* Then commonly used for "prosecution."

Jennet courtesied once more.

"Where is the little child that my brother took into his house of charity some years ago?"

"Under your favour, master, he's at school."

"Good. He must remain in thy charge. See thou have all things meet and cleanly for them that I shall send. I give you all good morrow."

And Mr. Palmer and the attorney left the house, the latter having said little but observed much.

"Now, lads, you'll have to behave," remarked Jennet to the boys when they were gone.

"Ough!" said Joe.

"I hope the new master 'll be one that can keep you in order. Tom wants no keeping, but you do, though you're twice as big, and should know better."

"Tom's a milksop!" said Miles.

"He isn't. He's the impudentest little sparrow that ever pecked," responded Joe; "and I'll serve him out some day, or my name isn't Joseph Smalpage."

"Now, Joe, leave the child be," said Jennet. "Thou'lt earn no thanks if thou mispay * him."

* Annoy.

Joe only grinned horribly in answer, and Jennet thought it desirable to keep a keen eye upon him till the new master came, by which means she saved Tom for the moment from falling a victim to Joe's wiles.





CHAPTER XIV

PRAYER HEARD AND ANSWERED

THE new master made his appearance the next morning at an earlier hour than he was expected, accompanied by his wife, the wife's sister, and two daughters. He proved to be a grave, silent man, who looked well after the frolicsome Miles and the indolent Joe, to their sore disapprobation. His wife was of the stirring, housekeeping order, and ruled Jennet with a rod which that easy-tempered young woman considered to be made of iron. The daughters were young girls, in wholesome—or, perhaps, rather more than wholesome—fear of their parents. The wife's sister belonged to a class very common at that time, but rare at all others. She was an ex-nun.

Two or three convents of every order were

reasonably permitted to survive the dissolution of the monasteries, wherein aged women of the order, who had no other home, and no relatives that could (or in some cases would) receive them, might live together in peace and comfort for the remainder of their lives. But the younger nuns, or such as had relatives with whom they could find shelter, were not permitted to avail themselves of this indulgence. Sister Goodith, of Hinton, who now became domesticated at the "Bell," belonged to the latter group. Her brother-in-law had willingly given her a home, trusting thereby to increase that little heap of merit which he was carefully piling up in view of the judgment to come. It rather augmented the valuable heap to feel that Sister Goodith was not precisely the most delightful inmate that could have been selected. She was one of those painful persons who entertain the belief that their holiness is exactly in proportion to the suffering they inflict on themselves—which usually means, in addition, the sufferings they contrive to inflict on other people. Having been prevented by Providence—or, as she thought, by the machinations of Satan—from leading her life according to the iron rules of the strictest monastic order, Sister Goodith was implacably

determined to balk Providence by carrying out the rule in her brother's house. She required a cell to herself, a special *menu* at table, garments of a particular cut, and the careful observance of the canonical hours; and she gave far more trouble by insisting on the absence of all ordinary comforts than a fashionable woman who stipulated for unusual luxuries. Not only must her chamber-wall be denuded of the customary hangings, but the very hooks which supported them must be taken out of the wall; and, if it chanced that the rye-bread ran short, nothing could induce Sister Goodith to taste the ordinary household loaf, though the alternative were that somebody who could not well be spared had to take an hour's journey for the missing article. Not to go on her own errands was an article of Sister Goodith's creed. Her face was as sacredly invisible outside the house as if she had been still in the cloister. Her brother-in-law put up with these caprices, because he fancied that it was a good work to do so; her sister, because she superstitiously feared some mysterious ill-luck if she should oppose the holy woman, and also a little because she feared an outbreak of—holy indignation, Sister Goodith styled it, but in a sinful

extern it would certainly have been regarded as an excessively bad temper. Happily for the rest of the world, the ex-nun lived chiefly in her cell—which for reasons of inscrutable perfection she required to be the best bedroom in the house—and only shone on the family at meal-times. Of the apprentices she took no notice, save to cross herself when she met them; to Jennet she never spoke, except when she had some fault to find with her; but to poor little Tom, from the first moment of her coming, the holy sister seemed to take an unreasoning and unreasonable hatred.

So patent was this even to unobservant Jennet, that she silently moved Tom's little bed from the corner which it had hitherto occupied into her own chamber, alleging to the new mistress that Mr. Palmer's orders had been that the child should remain in her special charge. Thither every night, as the clock struck six, up came Tom, until one evening when it pleased the new mistress to send the little boy on an errand which kept him out until half-an-hour beyond his usual time.

When Jennet came to bed that night she found Tom wide awake—a very unusual occurrence.

“Hast not been asleep, Tom?”

“No” (sounded very like a sob).

“Why, lad, what aileth thee?”

“Oh, Jennet, tell me!—have I broke my promise?”

“Broke thy promise?—never a whit! Why, what would the child be at?”

“But, Jennet, I told mistress I would hie me abed every night when the clock chimed six; and I haven’t, not to-night.”

“Thou hast done thine utmost, lad. None can do more. Turn thee around, and go to sleep, like a good lad, as thou art. Mistress Newport must be minded, thou wist, as our own mistress; she should surely say so.”

“Would God say so?”

“Well, Tom, I know not much about that.”

“Oh, but that’s what I want to know!” said the little voice, with Tom’s whole heart in it.

Jennet was sorry to see the child’s trouble; all the more so that she had not an idea how to comfort him.

“Thou canst ask thy schoolmaster, if thou must know.”

“Why, Jennet, how silly of me to forget! I can ask God Himself,” said Tom, in a very different tone.

"I see not how thou wilt win any answer," said Jennet, in a rather puzzled tone.

"Oh, He'll show me, somehow; He'll know how," replied Tom brightly, jumping out of bed and kneeling down by his bedside for a few moments. Then, rising, he scrambled back into bed, and in ten minutes more was fast asleep.

He left Jennet a prey to some searchings of heart. A broken promise had never interfered with her sleep, and that certainly was not because she had never broken one. A dim, wholesome idea that she might be better than she was began to work in Jennet's mind, along with an equally true conviction that Tom's single-hearted aim to please God was a very different thing, and a far more holy and heavenly thing, than Sister Goodith's punctilious and uncomfortable observances of rule.

On being summoned, a few days later, by the stroke of a dagger on the bell—there was no more convenient method of ringing it—Jennet found Mr. Palmer at the house door.

"An't like you, master, Master Newport is in the shop and the mistress forth a-marketing," said Jennet, with a courtesy.

"Prithee, let me within, my maid, notwithstanding the same," answered Mr. Palmer, stepping inside.

“I will speak with them at after, but I likewise desire to have speech of you and the child.”

“If it like you, master, he’s gone to school.”

“Very good; then will I have a moment’s speech of thyself. Art content with thy new master and mistress, or no?”

“Middling, master; they’re not ill to serve, though the mistress doth drive me a trifle faster than mine old mistress. If Sister Goodith were back in her convent, I’d thank the hallows; but otherwise things go metely even. Master Newport hath them lazy lads well in hand—and that’s a blessing.”

“I dare warrant it is; but what ails thee with Sister Goodith? I was told she was a good and holy woman.”

“That’s just the brush, master. She’s so holy, there’s no living with her; ever so much too holy for this everyday world. Should be all saints’ days to keep her going. If all matters aren’t just as she’d have ’em, and that’s vastly uncomfortable to most folks’ thinking, there’s some’at happens which I suppose I mustn’t call by its right name, being as she’s that good.”

“What were its right name if thou or I did the same?”

"Well, master, I should call it a tedious bad temper, saving your presence; but it doesn't all times pay to say what a body thinks."

A smile, which apparently he did not wish to show openly, trembled in the corners of Mr. Palmer's mouth.

"Are they good to the child?"

"Master and mistress is, but that holy gentlewoman she's mortal nasty, and that's the honest truth."

"Keep him out of her way, then."

"I does, all I can; but I'm pretty nigh wore out with keeping one eye on Sister Goodith and t'other on that mischievous Joe, plague take him!"

Mr. Palmer looked very grave.

"I saw my brother and sister last night in the prison, Jennet," he said, after a moment's thought.

"Dear heart, did you so, master? and I pray you when are they like to be forth?"

"Ah, it would take more than I to answer that question. When God's will is, and that is known alone to Himself. But my mistress gave me a message for thee and the lad."

"I'm fain to hear it, master. Pray you, give it me."

"She saith to thee, Do thy best in all things, and serve Mistress Newport as thou wouldst herself;

keep thee at home, a quiet, modest maiden, and strive to do all thy work to please God; so shalt thou be sure to please her. She bids Tom remember his verse, and fulfil his promise to her, without Mistress Newport shall otherwise order him, when of course he must do as he is bid, and must not think that his promise is broke if he be not able to fulfil it. But if he can so do, she bids him observe the same. Now, as for Sister Goodith——” Mr. Palmer was silent for a few seconds, intently studying the church tower. “I know not yet what I may be able to do. But to the best of thy power, Jennet, let not the child be ill-used, and see thou comfort him as thou mayest, if he lack comfort. Methinks he is not an evil lad.”

“He’s too good to live, master, and now you’ve got the truth. It’d take a sight less labour, saving your reverence, to make an angel of little Tom than it would of that saint upstairs. I’m in hopes the other angels won’t think so, but I’m tedious feared they may.”

“Methinks thou mayest be at ease, Jennet,” said Mr. Palmer, with a grave smile, as he turned to depart. “We are none of us so good that we be like to die of the malady.”

“Well, it’s grand true I’m not, master; and as

for you, you're like to know best how matters stand: but Tom's that good he queers me, and frights me too, by times. I would be glad if master and mistress could come back!"

"Pray for it, Jennet. Good morrow."

Mr. Palmer was only just out of sight when Tom came running up the steps. Jennet gave him the message from Agnes.

"There it is, now!" exclaimed Tom delightedly. "You said how would God send me an answer? But you see He knows how, and He has sent it. I'm so glad! I haven't broke my promise, and He says so. But, oh, Jennet! did Mr. Palmer say when they'd be home again?"

"Said he didn't know; but we could pray for it," answered Jennet uneasily.

"Why, of course we can! However was it we didn't? Jennet, dear heart, let's both do it, you and me. May be if we both ask it shall come faster."

"Thou canst. I'm not given much to praying."

"But you can begin now, can't you, Jennet dear?"

"Well, that wis I not. 'Tis hard work."

"Hard work! Why, Jennet, what meanest? Hard work to ask God for somewhat you lack!"

"All the prayers ever I knew are tedious hard

work, Tom. Ten Beliefs and twenty Paters, and ever so many Aves—and I know no more what they mean than if it were French. I suppose them above knows. Hope so, anyhow.”

“Oh, but that isn’t prayer, Jennet! Mistress says the Belief isn’t praying at all. Look you, if you said to me, ‘I believe thee, Tom,’ you wouldn’t be asking me for anything.”

“Well, I’m no scholar,” said Jennet, taking refuge in the first excuse which occurred to her.

“But you need not be learned, Jennet, to ask God to help you. He’ll hear you, or me, or anybody.”

“Tom, I wis nought at all about it. Thee let it be, now, like a good lad.”

“So I will, Jennet, if you won’t let it be. Please say you’ll ask for master and mistress to come forth soon. The Lord Jesus says if two people agree to ask for anything, He’ll hear them; so you see He is more like to hear you and me together than me all alone. Do say you will, Jennet. Do, dear!”

“Gramercy, child! Did ever anybody hear such a lad?”

“Now, Jennet, do promise me!”

“Just be quiet, Tom. You’ve such queer fancies touching promises. If I promise, you’ll think I go about to do it.”

"Of course I shall," said Tom solemnly. "I don't want you to promise if you won't do it. That would be shocking."

"But look there, I shall forget, sure as eggs be eggs."

"Oh, but I'll put you in mind!"

"Be off now, do!" exclaimed Jennet, half-vexed and half-laughing.

"Jennet, don't you want them to come back?" asked a sorrowful, reproachful voice.

"Sure I do, Tom."

"I think you desire it not much, if you won't even ask for it. You're as ill as Naaman."

"Who was he? I ne'er knew him."

"I shouldn't think you did, because he lived ever so many years ago. Elisha the Prophet told him to go and wash, and he should be healed of a dreadful malady, and he wouldn't, because it wasn't big and grand enough. But his servants came and asked him if he wouldn't have done a great thing, and why then wouldn't he do a little one?"

"Well, what then?"

"Why, then he saw how foolish he was, and went and did it."

"So thou reckonest I'm as ill as he, dost thou?"

"Yes, I do," said Tom gravely.

"Well, Tom, I'll make a bargain with thee. Whenever thou list to pray of a morrow for master and mistress, I'll say Amen to it. I can't speak no fairer."

"You speak not as though you wanted it very ill," said Tom disapprovingly. "However, we can begin with that. Perhaps you'll get a bit further than Amen by-and-by."





CHAPTER XV

READING OUT THE NAMES

GOOD morrow, Jennet! Well, your folks be yet in durance, look you. They'd better a deal have come in and submitted them to Holy Church. 'Tis all pride and stiffness of neck that causeth men to stand out after this fashion. Stands it not with reason that the King's grace and the Church must know the better than a grocer and his wife? Tell me that, now."

With that triumphant query, Mrs. Staniford set her arms akimbo, and looked down at Jennet, who, having only just begun to scour the doorstep, had no excuse for carrying herself and her pail out of the enemy's country. Jennet was about as far from being a scientific theologian as a girl of three-and-twenty, who had never learned to read, could

well be; but she was an honest-hearted girl, with all her thoughtlessness, and she had thought more during the previous month than in any ten years of her life before it. And as the motives of poor humanity are commonly mixed, party spirit and wounded pride came to help her in replying. Satan is always to be trusted to assist us in that manner.

“Well, Mistress Staniford, and I think you might hold your peace, when you knocked under at first blast o’ wind as blowed on you. My master and mistress be good enough to hold their own with anybody in England, let alone a bit of a fruiter as sells rotten pears for a tester the dozen. Afore I’d be so white-livered, never name lying and——”

A stinging box on the ear spoiled Jennet’s eloquence. “Take that, thou imperent hussy!” screamed the enraged fruiterer, whose professional feelings were no less outraged than her personal ones. “I’ll learn thee to talk o’ fraud to me! Thou poor mean atomy, that hasn’t an inch o’ raiment on thee but what’s come off a sheep’s back, to go to cast up at me——”

“I’ve cast up never a thing at you but what you’ve done, Mistress Staniford,” answered Jennet,

stung by the insinuation that her purse was too slender to afford her the luxury of linen garments—about as great an insult as could in the sixteenth century be offered to a respectable person. “I’d just like to know what there is for you to make a dust o’er, when you’re no better than a costard-monger, not to say a renegade.”

“I’ll tell the priest of thee, thou foul-tongued hussy!” shrieked Mrs. Staniford, in tones that were audible halfway down Gracechurch Street, and brought Mrs. Newport to the door to inquire what had happened.

“Mistress Newport, I’ll thank you to baste that overthwart maid of yours, and that right well! I never was so handled in my life afore, and that by one that’s no better nor the dirt under my feet!”

“The dirt under your feet’s a sight sweeter nor you!” said Jennet, as she retreated “in excellent order,” carrying the pail with her.

“Dear heart! whatever is all this ado?” demanded Mrs. Newport, in considerable surprise and perplexity. “Hath the maid been shrewd * with you, mistress, and for what?”

It did not suit Mrs. Staniford to answer the

* Saucy.

latter half of the question, so she restricted her explanation to the former.

"Ah! you're fresh to the place, Mrs. Newport, and to the maid belike. But I can tell you, she's the shrewdest, imperentest, outrageousest hussy ever you saw, and so you shall find her afore long. The pestiferous words she's given me, this self morrow! and all for nought!"

"Dear heart!" repeated Mrs. Newport. "And what caused her to begin of 'em?"

"Oh, that's neither here nor there! I'm not of a nature to keep venom in my stomach," was the magnanimous answer. "But she'll never mend till she has had a right good fustigation." *

A convenient customer appearing at that juncture, Mrs. Staniford was glad to retreat under cover of her fruit baskets, while Mrs. Newport followed Jennet. She found her in the kitchen wringing out her wet cloth.

"Jennet," said she quietly, "I had reckoned thee somewhat careless, but no shrew. Tell me, my maid, what means this?"

"Well, mistress," said Jennet honestly, "it means that I've let my temper get the better of me, as it isn't so hard to do when wapes comes a-buzzing round you."

* Beating.

“Which began the quarrel, Jennet?”

“She did, mistress—afore I spake a word to her, nor saw she was there. I was brown-deep,* and busied with my steps, and there she comes with her cluther,† of backbiting of master and mistress, and when I gave her back as good as she brought she turns on me as if I was a toad. The Angel Gabriel his self couldn’t have stood her, and that’s truth!”

“Well, well! Best let it pass, Jennet.”

“I’ll let her pass, with all my heart—out of the world, if she’s a mind. I want no words with her, not I. But I’m not a-going to stand by a-smiling while she casts ugly words at her betters, and my own folks to boot. I’m bound to speak for them as can’t speak for theirselves. She’s a spiteful toad, that’s what she is, and I only wish I’d told her so.”

“May be you told her enough,” remarked Mrs. Newport, smiling to herself, as she took down a pan, and began to make the favourite breakfast dish of “eggs and butter.” “But what was that I heard about the priest?”

“Oh, it was all her tediousness, because I said she should be ’shamed of herself for a renegade,

* Lost in thought.

† Noise.

as she be, and she casting it up at master that he wasn't, as I could not abear."

Jennet's explanation was not particularly lucid, but Mrs. Newport read between the lines without much difficulty.

"Mistress Staniford is right enough there, my maid. 'Tis but like thou shouldst be aggrieved if she spake against Master Clervis and his mistress, but bear in mind that private persons have no right to set them against the Church."

"I know nought about the Church, mistress, but it isn't for the like of her to speak against master and mistress."

"Truly, she ought not, when she spake to thee."

"She oughtn't, when she spake to nobody," said Jennet warmly, wiping the table energetically with a damp cloth. "They're a grand sight better nor she is, and if I never says nought falser nor that, I shan't have to stand much for lying."

Mrs. Newport buttered her eggs, and prudently refrained from an answer. Her mind was in the state of many minds at that time: not warmly adherent to any party, but calmly convinced—having never investigated the matter—that the truth must of course reside in the teaching of the Church. She neither knew more, nor wished to

know it. To investigate truth, to decide what was truth, to serve out truth to the public, in neat little mouthfuls, tasty and ready to be swallowed, was the Church's business; hers was but blindly to accept and thankfully to swallow. It saved a great deal of trouble.

So it did; but it led away from the way of understanding, and into the congregation of the dead. The man who mistakes poison for food is no better off than he who refuses food lest it should chance to be poison.

"Sister!" said a cold voice at the door.

"Well, Goodith?"

Mrs. Newport looked up in some surprise. It was not customary for the holy sister to leave her cell at that time in the day.

"I desire speech of you."

"Come forward, prithee. Here's none save me and Jennet."

"But other might enter. I desire you to come into the parlour."

"I cannot at this moment, Goditha. The eggs should be marred if I left them now."

"What if they be? There be matters of more import than eggs."

"That is because you eat none yourself," were

the words in Jennet's mind, but she did not allow them to proceed to her tongue.

"Is the matter of such moment it cannot tarry while after breakfast? Well, Jennet, my maid, see thou to make an end of these; I must go with Sister Goodith."

With full expectation that her dish of eggs would be ruined, Mrs. Newport hastily washed her hands, and followed the exacting Goodith to the parlour. The subject of the conference did not transpire; but Jennet noticed that Mrs. Newport's look was a curious mixture of vexation and relief.

Three days afterwards Mr. Joseph Smalpage brought a cut finger to Jennet, in the kitchen, with a request for a cobweb.

"Have you heard Sister Goodith's going hence?" he asked, as he applied the remedy.

"Going hence! Nay. What! not for good?"

"For good."

"Eh, dear me! I could dance on my head to hear it. Is it true, Joe?"

"Sure. Let's see thee."

"Well, did you ever! What's she going for?"

"Saith matters here be too lax and worldly for her. We're not good enough company."

"There's better company here nor she is!" cried

Jennet indignantly. "Howbeit, let her go. I shall not tarry her."

Sister Goodith made her appearance the next morning, attired for her journey, and went the length of condescending to breakfast with the seculars in the kitchen. She declined to take anything but dry bread and some very hard cheese, with a moderate allowance of the smallest ale. Keeping her face carefully averted from Joe and Miles, at whom she was too holy to look, she informed Jennet, with unusual graciousness, that she was going to live with a widowed sister, not far from her old convent.

"And there be none save women in the house," she added, with her eyes cast down upon her trencher. "My sister is poor, I am thankful to say, so that I can carry out my vow of holy poverty without temptation from without."

"Remember, I pray thee, Goodith," interpolated Mr. Newport, "to tell Lucy that if thy going thither be any inconvenience unto her, so that she lack help, I charge her to let me know, that I may send her aid."

Sister Goodith crossed herself, as her saintly ears were assailed by the sound of a masculine voice.

"I thank you, Brother," she replied, not at all

in thankful accents, "but methinks I shall not need to trouble you."

"I thought not of thy need, but of Lucy's," answered Mr. Newport bluntly. "She and her four little maids can scarce live on air, though such slender diet suit with thee—and I scanty reckon it shall."

Sister Goditha helped herself to another piece of cheese, and said nothing.

The horses now came to the door. Sister Goodith's travelling companion was a priest, whose convenience took him as far as Salisbury, from which place she would have to obtain another escort into Somerset. All was ready for setting out, when an unexpected delay occurred. Sister Goodith suddenly discovered that the pillion on which she was to travel had been covered with green velvet. It was a marvel that she had not discovered it sooner, the pillion having been in general family use for some months past; and the velvet was so faded and shabby, that Mrs. Newport had more than once declared herself ashamed to sit on it. But it was velvet, and therefore, must not be permitted to approach the sacred person of the holy woman. Mr. Newport reasoned with her in vain. Sister Goodith was meekly obdurate. In

the end, he was compelled to take out the nails which fastened the velvet to the pillion, and on the bare hard wood beneath the nun took her seat.

"What a blessing must it have been to you, my daughter," observed the priest to Mrs. Newport, "to have sheltered so holy an inmate as our Sister!"

"Jennet," said Tom, a few hours later, as he shelled beans in the kitchen, "think you Sister Goodith is so very holy?"

"She's a tedious creetur!" was Jennet's sincere reply.

"I think she isn't," continued Tom. "I see not that when our Lord rode on the ass into Jerusalem He blamed the disciples for casting their coats thereon, to make it soft for Him. I marvel if He should have gone to dwell with a poor sister that was a widow, if it should have made life harder for her and her little maids. And Sister Goodith can't feed folks in the wilderness, as He could. What think you, Jennet?"

"I think she's an irksome addlepate, and we're well rid of her," said Jennet heartily. "If some folks were all locked up in convents, and such like, I shouldn't shed no tears, I warrant you."

After Sister Goodith had taken her departure,

peace reigned for a time at the "Bell." There were indeed a few passages at arms between Jennet and Mrs. Staniford; but a sharp attack of illness coming on young Polydore Staniford left that lady's hands too full for much warfare without. Matters sank after a time into a state of armed neutrality, and there remained. Second thoughts induced Mrs. Staniford not to report Jennet to the priest, whom she did not wish to remind too clearly of her own past shortcomings.

In the country a further step was taken in the direction of retrogression by the King's order that none under the degree of a gentleman was to be permitted to read the Scriptures in private. The goods of St. Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury, were "conveyed" to his Majesty's use, with the exception of "such as were vile and refuse," for which his Majesty was graciously pleased to intimate that he had no use. Finally, a proclamation was issued that no teaching was in future to be allowed "contrary to the King's determinations, made or to be made!" The penalty of disobedience to this most reasonable order was—death.



CHAPTER XVI

THE ROYAL PARDON

NEARLY two years had elapsed since the arrest of Ralph Clervaux and his associates. Jennet stood at the door one afternoon in early spring, shading her eyes with her hand, as she watched Tom coming home from school. Tom was running home as if in a great hurry to get there; and before he had fairly reached the steps he breathlessly delivered his news.

"Jennet! Good news! Master Ettys—is out, I—do believe! I saw—Mistress Ettys—her back, in—the lane!"

"If thou hadst seen her face, I'd have been liever," said Jennet incredulously. "There's a deal of likeness in folks' backs."

"But I am sure it—was she, and not—nobody

else!" cried Tom excitedly. "And—oh, Jennet, thinkest not—if Master Ettys and his—mistress be let come—forth, our master and—mistress shall come home right soon?"

"Tarry a while, lad, till thou hast breath to speak. Well, I wis not: one keeps hoping, but—folks say, look thou, 'Hope maketh a good breakfast, but an ill supper.'"

"But, Jennet, we've been asking God!"

"Thou hast, trow. I didn't keep on so long. Seemed no use."

"Oh, Jennet, didn't you?" Tom's tone was one of great disappointment. "I thought we were both asking."

"Oh, 'tis no matter, Tom. Take not on, prithee. Them above doesn't care nought for my praying."

"But don't *you*, Jennet?"

"Come now, get thee in to thy supper," said Jennet, to whom that question was inconvenient. "I've made thee some curd puffs."

"Thank you, Jennet," said Tom soberly, as he walked into the house.

Jennet stood still at the door, for she was not anxious to meet a renewal of Tom's questions. His innocent wonder pricked her conscience. It

was not very long since Jennet had begun to discover that she had a conscience; and it was in the uncomfortable position of being half-awake, and very uncertain in its intimations. If it could only be persuaded to go quietly to sleep, as it had done for over twenty years, Jennet was under the impression that she would be a good deal happier. As yet her conscience troubled her sins more than her sins troubled her conscience.

As Jennet stood looking out, a tall man came into view at the further end of the street, who speedily revealed himself to her eyes as Mr. Palmer. She waited till he came up.

"Good morrow, Jennet, and good news," said he. "Master Ettys and his mistress be come forth, and 'tis thought thy master and mistress shall be of them pardoned on the King's marriage."

"Well, master, that is good news!" said Jennet heartily.

"I am come to bid Master Newport and his dame to have matters forward, so that they can move their lodging at a day's notice, if need be."

"I'll clean up after 'em with all the pleasure in life!"

"Why, have they used thee unkindly, my maid?"

"Oh nay, master, not to say that; they might

have been worser, and they might have been better; but she's not to compare with our own mistress, and I shall be fain to see her again."

"Little Tom shall be glad, if I err not."

"Eh, bless you, master, he'll dance on every hair of his head! He did conceit he saw the back of Mistress Ettys this morrow, and he was some set up therewith! Pray you, master, is Father Wisdom forth, or no?"

Mr. Palmer's amused face suddenly went very grave.

"Ay, Jennet," he said, in a slow tone, as if he were reluctant to allow it. "Father Wisdom came forth afore Master Ettys."

"Dear heart! I never thought he'd be let come so speedily."

"Nor did any that knew him," replied Mr. Palmer bitterly. "He hath purchased his liberty at an heavy price."

"In good sooth, master?—and how much hath he paid therefor, am't like you?"

"I might say 'Thirty pieces of silver,' and not be far out, my maid; for he hath sold Christ as Judas did. He hath paid the favour of God for it, and the smile of Jesus Christ; and, if it please not the Lord to recover him, the life of his own soul."

“What! you never—— Hath Father Wisdom recanted?”

It was not Jennet's voice whose horrified tones asked that question. Mrs. Castle, with a heavy basket on her arm, stood at the bottom of the steps, and with her Anne Bedike, having evidently heard the last words. Mr. Palmer bowed gravely.

“The good Lord help us!” exclaimed Anne, under her breath. “Who of us may look to stand, if this man hath fallen away?”

“They whom Christ holdeth,” answered Mr. Palmer.

“Dear heart!” said Mrs. Castle. “Master Palmer, think you there shall be any easement now to the poor Gospellers? Folks say the new Queen is a Lutheran.”

“Ay, a Lutheran; not a Gospeller,” was the significant answer.

At that time the Gospellers answered to the old Evangelicals of the present day, often termed Puritans; while the Lutherans were the High Church party of that time—with this important difference, that many of the latter are now hastening from Scriptural light into Popish darkness, while the Lutherans, in the main, were then slowly emerging from the darkness into the light. The place

where they stood was about the same; but the progress was upward in the one case to Jerusalem the Golden, and downward in the other towards Babylon the Great.

"Ah, I take you," said Mrs. Castle. "You would say, if the string be slacked, somewhat, it shall not be so far as to let us slip thereout."

"I know not, in good sooth, Mistress Castle. 'He himself,' as of old, 'knoweth what He will do,' and thereto I remit me."

It was characteristic of the times that every one of the four was at that moment thinking what no one of them dared to say. King Henry VIII., though only fifty-one years of age, was the prey of a serious disease, which would probably carry him off before many years were over. If his son should succeed while a minor, under the tutelage of the Duke of Somerset, his uncle, a Lutheran, who was gradually developing into a Gospeller, then there was hope. But no man dared to hint that the reigning Sovereign was mortal in a day when to be overheard using such words might lead to the accusation of high treason.

Mrs. Newport's voice was now heard calling Jennet, and the conference broke up, Mr. Palmer

following Jennet into the house. Little Tom, who had been in the backyard, engaged in his morning interview with Clover, which was the delight of both parties, came in and met Mr. Palmer in the passage.

"Tom," said that gentleman, "Master Ettys is forth: hadst heard it?"

"I thought I saw her!" exclaimed Tom, delight written on every feature of his face. "Pray you, good sir, when shall master be back?"

"That I cannot tell thee, little lad. Wouldst fain have him come?"

"I have asked God every morrow and night to send them home," said Tom simply.

Bashfulness was not in Tom's nature: and in those days people of all sorts indulged much more freely in religious conversation than society deems proper at the present time. It is sorrowfully true that a very large number of professors were mere talkatives, whose words contained all the religion there was about them.

"Therein thou hast done well, Tom," replied Mr. Palmer, laying his hand approvingly on the child's head—an action which Tom, who held the tall, grave man in high reverence, felt to be as good as a royal accolade. "I have heard nought

save good of thee all the time they have been hence; Mistress Newport, and Jennet, and thy schoolmaster, all bear testimony to thy good conversation; and be thou sure Master Clervis shall be well pleased therewith."

"And mistress, too?" asked Tom wistfully.

"Ay, Mistress Clervis also, I am well assured?"

"I'm glad!" said Tom. "Clover will, too."

Mr. Palmer dismissed the child with a smile.

The days for some time after that were exceedingly busy. Mrs. Newport, who hated dirt with a deadly hatred, was determined to leave every inch of the house, said Jennet, as clean as a Venice mirror.

"Look you, lads, that you cut not your fingers," Jennet had said to the apprentices, early in the new reign; "for there's never a cobweb in all the house, nor willn't be while Mistress Newport's here."

Early in July all the work was done, and all but necessaries packed up, so that the Newports could remove at once, and leave the house clear for its owners. Mr. Palmer spent two or three days over the accounts with Mr. Newport, and declared himself quite satisfied with the style in which he had managed the business.

The King's marriage was fixed for the twelfth of July; and on the evening before, the proclamation of pardon for those whose names were rehearsed in it was set up in several public places, amongst others on the doors of St. Paul's Cathedral.

Mrs. Newport met Tom on the steps as he came from school.

"Give thy books to me, lad," said she, "and run thou quickly to Paul's, and bring us word if Master Clervis' name be in the proclamation or no. Haste, now! leave not the grass grow. Lack-a-day! I might have told the child to fly! He's sure got a pair of wings hid some whither under his doublet."

There certainly was no need to tell Tom to make haste on that errand. Up one street and down another the boy raced, until he came out of Cheapside at the east end of St. Paul's. In at the churchyard gate, and through the Pardon Church Haw, the burying-ground which then lay between the Cathedral and Paternoster Row, his fleet little feet carried him to the west front, where a disappointment awaited him. The west door was besieged with people who had come on the same errand as Tom, and who took

but little account of a child. Three or four endeavours to press through the crowd proved futile. Into face after face Tom peered, trying to find a kindly one that looked likely to help him. Most of the faces were coldly busy, or merely curious. A few seemed vexed and sulky. At last Tom took heart of grace, and appealed to his next neighbour — a stripling of nineteen years, small and slenderly built, but with a not unkindly expression in his bright, intelligent eyes.

“Am’t like you, sweet sir, would you, if you can see them, tell me for the love of God the names of such as be pardoned?”

The brilliant eyes looked down with an amused aspect.

“Be your friends like to be found amongst them, young man?”

“All I love, sir,” said the child, with an uncontrollable sob of overtried patience.

“Make way, pray you, good people,” requested the youth. “Here is a matter of grave import to be dealt withal. Now then, spring and I will lift thee.”

Little Tom Green had not the faintest idea that he had appealed to anybody in particular, and

would have been amazed indeed to hear that he was being lifted in the arms of one of the foremost men of the century—the yet unknown Mr. William Cecil, who, fifty-five years afterwards, was to die Earl of Burleigh and Lord High Treasurer of England.

“Now, lad! Canst thou see?” asked his friend.

“I can, sweet sir, and thank you heartily.”

“Then read out the names, prithee, and that shall serve us all that cannot.”

The people crowded closer to hear, as Tom read out the names in his clear childish treble. There were twenty-six of them; and only the last five had any interest for Tom. But he plodded patiently and conscientiously through the list, until he came to those at the end which specially concerned himself. The sudden change in the little voice at that point was eloquent to such as had ears to hear it.

“John Hardyman,” read Tom, “Margaret Ambsworth, Humphrey Hasilbury, Ralph Clervis, Agnes Clervis. Oh, I’m so glad! I’m so glad!”

“Pretty plain that, young man,” said Mr. Cecil, lowering Tom to mother earth. “Are they thy father and mother—this Ralph and Agnes Clervis?”



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"Then read out the names, prithee, and that shall serve us all
that cannot."—Page 196.

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“Dear heart! Sir, how did you know which they were?” inquired Tom innocently.

“It needed no magician to tell that, my giant,” was the good-humoured answer. “Be they so?”

“Sir, they be my master and mistress, that took me up when I was a poor lost lad, left by my mother’s death without a friend in all the world; and they have bred me up, and sent me to school, and always been good to me, and I love them with all my heart, and I thank God He hath heard me, and brought them safe out of the hands of wicked folks,” said Tom excitedly, and all in a breath.

“Well, for sure!” exclaimed a woman in the crowd. “Couldn’t they find no worser folks than such to send i’ prison?”

“Run home, little man,” added Mr. Cecil gently; “and God send you a merry meeting!”

“Please, sir, He will, for I’ve asked Him every day these two years; and I’ll ask Him to bless you that have been so good to me, I will!” cried Tom, in heartfelt gratitude.

“So do, my child,” was the grave, soft answer. “Amen!”



CHAPTER XVII

REST FOR THE LAND



LOVER, having been let out into the street for an evening stroll, was sauntering on his occasions. He had carefully inspected a post, had informed a passing spaniel that he did not think much of him, and had exchanged good evenings with one or two of his canine acquaintances, when all at once he stood “at attention,” on three legs, the fourth paw uplifted in the air. With fixed eyes, and ears pricked to the utmost, he listened intently for the repetition of the sound which had chained him motionless to that spot. In another instant he sprang forward with a joyful yelp, and bounded away in the direction of Lombard Street.

A minute later Agnes Clervaux, walking quietly

eastwards along that thoroughfare, to her great astonishment received a sudden blow which fairly knocked her into Ralph's arms.

"Dear saints! what came unto me?" she breathlessly exclaimed.

"Only a friendly welcome," said Ralph, laughing, "though a rough one, I grant. Why, Clover, lad! thou hast wellnigh cast thy mistress down. So thou art come first to greet us?"

"Dear heart! 'tis Clover!" cried Agnes, patting the dog, whose face and tail, as well as tongue, proclaimed his entire satisfaction with the meeting.

But Clover's work was not done. As soon as he felt that he had expressed his feelings sufficiently for the moment away he darted, to astonish Jennet extremely, as she was pouring out slops into the gutter, by sending the pail entirely out of her hands.

"Love us, all the blessed saints!" was the irrelevant exclamation of the amazed young woman.

Clover did not wait to hear more, but dashed into the kitchen, where he desired Tom, in the most urgent doggish language, to follow him without a moment's delay. Tom, who was well acquainted with Clover's tongue, obeyed the summons, Clover running in front, and looking back every minute

to ascertain that Tom continued to follow. In this manner the pair proceeded till they came in sight of the released prisoners, when Tom uttered a shout of joy, and set off running with all his might.

“Oh, mistress! dear mistress!—and master be-like! I’m so glad, and Clover’s so glad, and we’re all as happy as ever we can be to see you home again! And we’ve cleaned all the house, and Miles has a rose in his girdle, and Jennet says she’ll dance on her head, and she’s made raynecles* for supper, and Joe’s hung posies all over the parlour, and Mistress Ettys hath been three times to see if you were yet come, and Miles has spent four evens with his cither, that he might play ‘The hunt is up’ when you come, and we’re so glad—we *are* so glad! Oh, I know not what to do!”

All which incoherent information, poured forth in a great hurry, served for little more than to secure the one point which, after all, was of most importance—namely, to make Ralph and Agnes thoroughly realise that they were warmly welcomed by all in their employ.

They both stooped to kiss the child. In that

* A kind of very spicy sausages.

simpler age people did not consider that they lost their dignity by showing that they possessed hearts.

"And there is one thing more whereof we have heard to our much content," said Ralph, "and that is a good, obedient little lad, that hath had alway a care to fulfil the bidding we left with him."

"I've tried, master," said Tom, blushing modestly.

"We know thou hast," responded Agnes, "and we are well pleased thereat, as thou mayest hereafter find to thy comfort."

Home was reached at last, Jennet warmly commended, Joe and Miles kindly greeted, all of whom were beaming with smiles; supper over and rest welcome, when the latch was lifted, and William and Margaret Ettys walked in. Late though it was, they sat and talked for over an hour. There was much to tell on both sides of the prison experience, and the girdler, having been set free some weeks the sooner, could impart a good deal of outside news. Mr. Wisdom's sorrowful fall was first discussed.

"Doth he face it out with a good brag?" asked Ralph.

"Methinks not so," answered Ettys. "I have

seen him but once, and so soon as he perceived me coming along Fleet Street he crept out of the way and did slink up Shoe Lane, as if he desired not to meet me to my face. There be that say he shall have his reward in some manner of Church preferment."

"Ay, he shall have his reward—be ye sure of that," replied Ralph. "But whether he shall love the savour thereof when it cometh, that I remit to his conscience. Oh, Will, this I know, and methinks thou dost likewise—that it is not only truer, and wiser, and better, but far happier, to follow Christ up the hill, carrying the hinder end of His cross, than to dance with Herodias' daughter, or to sit upon the throne with Herod."

"Ay, it is so; and not that only, Ralph. It strengtheneth a man to carry the cross."

"Truth, if he bear it along with Christ. But they that have to carry it alone have a hard burden."

"How goes it with other our friends?" asked Agnes. "Mistress Castle, and Anne Bedike, and Master Smith. Oh, and tell me, prithee, how Mistress Staniford carrieth herself?"

Margaret Ettys laughed. "For Mistress Castle," said she, "she saith, a bit of trouble doth her a

deal of good, for it hath took down her bulk, that she is not to the full so fat as formerly. I have not yet seen Anne, but I hear that she is well. As to Beysilla Staniford, she beareth the brag, and is ready to face any man."

"She hath lesser grace, then, than Father Wisdom," observed Ralph.

"Truly," said Ettys, "I have hope of Father Wisdom. I cannot but think that he hath the root of the matter, and that the Lord will recover him. So brave a preacher, surely, shall not be suffered to fall utterly away."

"Ah, Will, that test shall scanty stand the trial. The very devil can quote Scripture, and aptly, too. The gifts of the Holy Ghost be not His grace, nor doth an unctuous tongue discover an anointed heart. Yet I do trust, as respects Father Wisdom, that he may repent. If he be in very deed one of the true sheep, trust the Good Shepherd to go after it, until He find it. But like as a man shall oft feel the most sense of his malady after he hath taken a turn toward recovery, so likewise it is often through deep waters that the lost sheep is brought back to the fold."

They were so much interested in their conversation that none of them had heard the slight click

of the gently-lifted latch, and Margaret Ettys was the first to perceive that another had been added to the group sitting in the twilight.

"Dear heart! who is that?" said she, and all the rest turned their heads to look.

"No enemy," answered the musical tones of a well-remembered voice, and an astonished cry of "Father Rose!" rang from every tongue.

"Even so," said Mr. Rose, coming forward.

"Well, you are a good sight, for sure!—but is it safe?"

"Safe for the glory of God? I will trust Him to have a care of that."

"Nay, but for you?"

"Ay, and for me also, though God's care is not like man's. Man's care considereth what it brings you through, God's hath regard rather of what it brings you to."

"Well, I wonder, I do, you dared come back," said Margaret.

"Sister, the call of the Lord was upon me, and I dared not hold back. His fire was burning in mine heart, and I could not stay. Here, in mine own England, be souls lost in darkness, and shall I take mine ease in safety beyond the seas? It may be well for the moment that a man should

flee before the storm—well for an hour that he should rest, to recover his strength for more and better work. But the danger avoided, and the hour over, he must be back at his work. I have left my Marguerite with friends; she will be safe. But for me, my post is here in England, and I am here to fill it. Like Luther, ‘I can do none other; God be mine help!’”

“Amen!” responded both Ralph and Ettys.

“Father,” said Agnes, rising, and on hospitable thoughts intent, “have you yet secured a lodging for the night?”

“I have not, my sister; I am but now arrived in London, and I came to see how it fared with you ere I went further. I heard you had been suffered to come forth as this day only.”

“That is well: then will I go see to have the bed made ready,” said Agnes simply.

“What! in the very hour of your home-coming, when it is for harbouring me and the like of me that you have suffered?” said Mr. Rose, putting forth a detaining hand.

“Father!” she said, looking up into his face, “think you it were well that the effect of our suffering should be to earn us the dread words, ‘I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in’?”

Mr. Rose's hand dropped, and a smile trembled on his lips.

"You have disarmed me, my sister," he replied. "I cannot but yield to that argument, if you have strength to stand to it. We must not deprive one another of God's blessing. And in truth it is not in much peril I shall place you, seeing I mean to tarry in London but this night, and then go onward to Suffolk, whither certain friends have bidden me. There will scarce be a chance for them in power to hear of mine arrival ere I shall be gone."

"If you look to tarry a twelvemonth, Father, you will be but the more welcome," said Ralph heartily. "To harbour you in such a strait, is to harbour Christ our Saviour."

"And for the second twelvemonth, Father, I beg you seek the Saracen's Head," said Ettys, with equal earnestness.

"May God bless you both!" was the answer, "as assuredly He will."

Mr. Rose stayed only the one night, going on to Suffolk at a very early hour the next morning. Before he mounted his horse a little voice accosted him in the passage.

"Father!" it said, "would you of your grace be pleased to accept a rose from Clover and me?"

Mr. Rose accepted his namesake with a smile, and fastened it in his girdle.

"I thank thee and Clover," he answered, patting the little head.

"Tom, wherefore didst thou offer Father Rose the flower?" asked Agnes an hour later.

Tom hesitated, appearing shy for the first time.

"Think you he was angered, mistress?" he asked a little anxiously, but evasively.

"Not in no wise, my little lad; I think he was well pleased. But what was in thy mind that caused thee to do the same?"

The answer did not come at once, and Agnes wisely waited in silence for the words which shaped themselves at last.

"Mistress, I alway thought—if I'd been there—when our Lord was—I would so have liked to offer Him some flowers. Nobody never gave Him any! At least it isn't set down. And He hadn't many pleasant things. So, as I couldn't—Father Rose, he seemed to come next like—and—I hoped He'd understand I meant it for Him."

"He would understand, little Tom," said Agnes softly. "But why didst thou join Clover with thyself in giving it?"

"Oh, mistress, I wanted Him to have it from

Clover too! Clover's me, and I'm Clover. And I'm sure He'd pat Clover—he's such a good dog, and we love each other so."

That evening Agnes laid her hand upon Ralph's shoulder, as he sat resting himself in the easy chair—that is to say, a large wooden chair piled up with cushions, for no other kind of easy chair was known at that date—and told him about Tom and his rose.

"God bless the little lad!" said Ralph huskily.

"It seemeth me," said Agnes, "that when God saw it needful to take our children to Himself, He sent us a child of His own in exchange therefor."

"A great charge, wife!" answered Ralph—"to train up the King's child meet for His Father's palace!"

"But what with the King to help us," suggested Agnes: "His full treasury to supply all our needs, and His command to let Him know them whensoever they arise. That lightens the charge, Ralph."

"Ay, sweet heart," was the reply; "and woe is unto us if we do not fulfil it!"



CHAPTER XVIII

THE DIVINE DELIVERANCE

IN 1543, and yet further in 1544, the intolerable Act of the Six Articles was somewhat lightened. The penalty of death was no longer exacted for first offences, and the oaths of a greater number of witnesses were required for conviction. After this relaxation, some of the wives of the Protestant clergy, who had lived in exile since 1539 or the following year, ventured to return to England.

Among these was Marguerite Rose. The first hint of a possibility of return raised her hopes to the utmost, and a letter from her husband suggesting that, if she cared to run the risk, it might now be ventured, sent her flying to her own chamber to pack her saddle-bags. She had now an additional

item of luggage in the shape of a baby, born during their residence abroad.

But no hardships or difficulties daunted Marguerite Rose, when compared with the faintest hope of rejoining the husband who was all the world to her. She made her little Thekla into a bundle, after the German fashion, with a pillow, and tied it round her waist as she sat on horse-back.

Before her journey was well begun, Mrs. Rose heard of an unexceptionable convoy with which she could travel. The list of English clergy who had perforce parted with their wives was headed by the Primate of All England. Mrs. Cranmer was a German lady, and had been residing with her German relatives since the passing of the Act. She now rejoined her husband, and in her suite Mrs. Rose made her journey to Dover.

It astonished Ralph and Agnes Clervaux no little when one evening a tap on the parlour door was followed by the exclamation of, "*A la bonne heure!* shall I herein come?" in the familiar voice of little Mrs. Rose.

"Come in, right heartily, dear Meg!" cried Agnes, running to welcome her favourite friend.

“God give you a good even, Father Rose! Truly it doth rejoice mine heart to see you again together. But what is this, Meg; why, hast thou a babe?”

“Have a care, *ma chérie*! If you make her to weep, I shall fight you!” said Mrs. Rose humorously. “I am fierce as one wild boar, if my *fillette* be touch. She is worth thousand times all the treasury of King Henry.”

“Of that am I well assured,” replied Agnes, laughing. “Prithee, lay her down here on the day-bed, and I will cover her up warm with this mantle.”

Little Thekla was carefully deposited on the day-bed, which was a sort of sofa.

“Now, Tom,” said Mrs. Rose severely, “if thou do my child so much as touch, I shall—I know not what I shall do to thee! I shall twist thy head off thy shoulders, at the very least!”

“Be not afeared, mistress,” calmly answered the philosopher. “I never touch them things, I make no count of ’em.”

“Thou wicked boy, wouldst thou say thou lovest not a babe?”

“That I don’t!” said Tom emphatically, with more lucidity than strict grammatical accuracy.

"Lads scarce ever do, sweetheart," added Agnes, who was much amused.

"They be the pests, those *polissons*!" exclaimed Mrs. Rose, with a funny pretence of anger. "Now, Annis, *ma bonne*, we are starving, both two; wilt thou not give us the bread?"

"Ay, in very deed, with somewhat more thereto, so soon as ever I can make ready!" cried Agnes, hastening to the kitchen. "Tom, come thou and aid me."

Only a few minutes were required to set before the wearied and hungry travellers a Lumbard pie (a highly-seasoned veal pie), a dish of taffaty tarts (apple puffs spiced with fennel seeds), and a jug of buttered ale, which was made by boiling ale with sugar, butter, and spices.

"I was told one piece of ill-news as we came through Aldgate," said Mr. Rose. "My Lord Audley has resigned the King's seals, and my Lord Wriothesley hath them in charge. That is but ill-hearing for us Gospellers."

"That am I not astonished to hear," answered Ralph. "My Lord Audley hath suffered some disease for long time past, and his resignation was somewhat expected."

"He was no Lutheran, neither a Gospeller; yet

was he well-disposed. I have divers kindly deeds for which to thank him. It was of him that I held my licence to preach. But my Lord Wriothesley is very ill affected towards us. At his hands we are like to meet with little favour."

"Where think you to dwell now?" asked Ralph.

"We have already an home provided, thanks be to God," answered Mr. Rose. "My Lord of Sussex hath made offer to take us into his house at Attleborough, where we can lie quiet enough, so long as it please God."

"Verily, I am glad to hear it for your sake, seeing you shall belike be safer there than in London. Otherwise, we had counted us happy to receive you here, should it have served your convenience."

That night when Tom went up to bed, Agnes happened to go upstairs just behind him. As he was about to enter the attic, he paused and looked up into her face.

"Mistress, Father Rose cometh not here, methinks?"

"No, Tom, not at this time."

"Then his mistress shall not come?"

"No, she shall not."

"I'm glad."

"Why, Tom! I counted thou hadst a kindness for Mistress Rose. She is my dear friend."

"Oh, ay! I love her well enough. I was afeard if she came she'd bring that thing with her."

"What, the babe?" said Agnes, greatly amused. "Canst thou not away therewith?"

"I can't. They do nought but squeal. They aren't half as pretty as Clover. Nor they haven't a bit of discreetness," said the philosopher, in a disgusted tone.

"But, Tom, dost forget thou wert once a——"

"Don't name it, mistress, I pray you! I can't abear to think of it. *Me* one o' them things! Don't say it!"

Tom's tone was so disgusted that Agnes could no longer help laughing.

"Well, Tom, little Thekla shall some day be a woman, an' it please God. Thou mislikest not women, trow."

"I don't think so much of 'em," was the truthful answer, "saving you and Jennet. Oh, and mother! I meant not to leave her out—never."

"Then canst thou not love women for thy good mother's sake?"

"Might, may be," answered Tom sententiously, walking into the attic, "if they didn't make it so hard to love 'em for their own."

Lord Audley survived his resignation barely a month; and the retrogression went on more rapidly under the auspices of his successor. The Lutheran Queen could do nothing for her co-religionists. She had hard work to save her own head. In July, Anne Askew was martyred; in September, Bibles were burned at St. Paul's Cross, and the possession of the Word of God was prohibited, save to the upper classes. Lord Sussex came to the conclusion that he could no longer keep Mr. Rose in his house with safety to himself, and he dismissed him, kindly enough. The Roses journeyed to London by night, where they tried to lose themselves—neither at the "Bell" nor at the "Saracen's Head," both which places were too well known to the enemy. The hearts of the Gospellers sank within them. They did not know that they were passing through the last year of Henry VIII., that hour before the dawn which is proverbially the darkest. And then on the 28th of January, in the next year, the great bell of St. Paul's tolled for a royal death, announcing that the man in whose hands their lives lay, and who had dealt so capriciously and cruelly with God's Church, had, after a reign of eight and thirty years, "passed to the mercy of God."

And so peace fell upon the land, and the Church had rest, for the six and a half years' reign of England's young Josiah.

Robert Wisdom had his reward. Among those brave men and women who counted not their lives dear unto them, but bore the bloodstained banner of the truth safe through the awful battle of Mary's reign, he had no place. Yet he did not, like many who recanted through fear, simply hide himself and be lost when that battle was over. He recanted his recantation—when it was quite safe to do so. In the early years of Elizabeth he was an honoured dignitary of the Church, and he sat as Archdeacon of Ely in the famous Conference of 1562. But when, six years later, he stood before the judgment-seat, did he find that abundant entrance into the heavenly city which was the portion of such men as John Bradford and Lawrence Saunders?—or did he creep in, maimed and halt—saved, but so as by fire?

It was far otherwise with Thomas Rose. His colours had never been furled for a moment, and he had braved all the power of the enemy. But the God whom he served so fearlessly and faithfully watched over His servant. Many hairbreadth escapes, many strait imprisonments, much obloquy,

hunger and cold, and loneliness and exile, were his portion during Mary's reign. The honours which descended upon men less faithful never came to him. It is generally the weak men, ready for concession and compromise, who earn the rewards of earth; and they have their reward, but not from the Father in Heaven. Through this weary journey Thomas Rose travelled to a quiet resting-place, the country vicarage of Luton, which he held by gift of Queen Elizabeth for twelve years, till his death in 1574. It was all the world gave him. His reward was kept safe till he landed on the other side. Perhaps it was the fairer, because it was entirely heavenly and incorruptible.

The reign of Edward VI. had only just begun when the approaching change was made manifest. The Bloody Statute could not be repealed until Parliament came together, and that was not before November; but it was so generally understood that it was now practically a dead letter, that everybody treated it as already abolished. Mr. and Mrs. Rose came openly to visit their friends, arrangements were entered into for prayer meetings and sermons in the near future, and every face wore an aspect of relief. The last idea which occurred to any one was the supposition that the clouds

might return after the rain; the fear furthest from every mind was any vaticination of that awful ordeal to come, and only six years away.

"How thankful should we be!" said Ralph Clervaux to Mr. Rose, as they sat together at supper in the house of the former one fine September evening in 1547.

"And how careful!" was the unexpected answer.

"Careful! Methought that right the thing we need be no longer. Take me with you, I pray."

"'When Ephraim spake trembling, he exalted himself in Israel: but when he offended in Baal, he died.' 'Beware lest thou forget the Lord, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt.' That is it which I fear: that we may go back, now we be set free to serve God, whether openly or secretly, and the last shall be worse than the first. It was when 'Jeshurun waxed fat,' that 'he lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.'"

"Truly we may be in danger of that," said Ralph very gravely. "How be we to keep us safe therefrom?"

"'Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness. And now, Israel, what doth the Lord

thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul?'"

"'Tis a great requirement," said Agnes, drawing a long breath.

"Far too great," answered Mr. Rose, "to be fulfilled by anything but love. Service is the hardest work to cold necessity, to bare duty, to a rebellious heart; but to love, it is the very essence of her being—less an act to be done than an air to be breathed. Love cannot but serve; she cannot be content without service. Unwillingness to serve argueth lack of loving."

"But if love be cold, Father, how shall we warm it?"

"Not by digging in the frozen ground of our own hearts, but by placing ourselves in the warm beams of the Sun of Righteousness. 'We love Him, because He first loved us.'"

"It verily seemeth me at times that mine heart is so cold I can scarce tell if I love God at all or no."

"My sister, if you had no love at all, you would not be conscious of the lack thereof. Love is not lively motion, but prompt obedience. Write not

hard things against thyself because thy feelings be not quick and ready, so long as thou art ready to do service and quick to discern thine own shortcoming. 'Whoso keepeth His word, in him is the love of God perfected.' 'If a man love Me, he will keep My words,' 'and if ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love.' And, if we keep His words, He will keep that which we have committed unto Him against that day."

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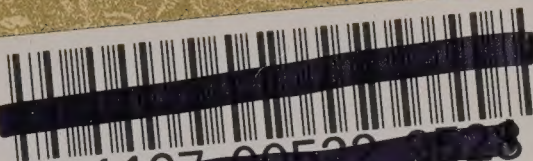
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